Two-year Impact of Prevention Programs on Adolescent Depression: An Integrative Data Analysis Approach

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This paper presents the first findings of an integrative data analysis of individual-level data from 19 adolescent depression prevention trials (n = 5210) involving nine distinct interventions across 2 years post-randomization. In separate papers, several interventions have been found to decrease the risk of depressive disorders or elevated depressive/internalizing symptoms among youth. One type of intervention specifically targets youth without a depressive disorder who are at risk due to elevated depressive symptoms and/or having a parent with a depressive disorder. A second type of intervention targets two broad domains: prevention of problem behaviors, which we define as drug use/abuse, sexual risk behaviors, conduct disorder, or other externalizing problems, and general mental health. Most of these latter interventions improve parenting or family factors. We examined the shared and unique effects of these interventions by level of baseline youth depressive symptoms, sociodemographic characteristics of the youth (age, sex, parent education, and family income), type of intervention, and mode of intervention delivery to the youth, parent(s), or both. We harmonized eight different measures of depression utilized across these trials and used growth models to evaluate intervention impact over 2 years. We found a significant overall effect of these interventions on reducing depressive symptoms over 2 years and a stronger impact among those interventions that targeted depression specifically rather than problem behaviors or general mental health, especially when baseline symptoms were high. Implications for improving population-level impact are discussed.

Journal:

Prevention Science
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