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An evaluation of the Chromis programme: Treatment for psychopathic offenders

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Introduction to Psychopathy

• Psychopathy is one of the most researched personality disorders in recent years (Caldwell, 2011).

• Psychopathy is a disorder with important implications for both the individual who experiences it and for the community they live in (Moreira et al., 2014).

• Psychopathy is a personality disorder comprising both affective and behavioural aspects (Dolan & Doyle, 2007).
Introduction to Psychopathy

Affective:

- Shallow affect
- Superficial charm
- Sense of grandiosity
- Manipulative
- Lack of remorse or guilt
- Callousness and lack of empathy
- Failure to accept responsibility
Introduction to Psychopathy

Behavioural:

- Poor behavioural control
- Need for stimulation and proneness to boredom
- Promiscuous sexual behaviour
- Impulsivity
- Criminal versatility

(Dolan & Doyle, 2007)
Can Psychopaths be Treated?

• The traditional view is that psychopathic individuals cannot be treated (Felthous, 2011).

• It has even been said that the wrong treatment programme can make their behaviour worse (Reidy, Kearns & DeGue, 2013).

• Effective treatment programmes for psychopathic offenders are important as psychopathy is a risk factor for violent recidivism (Laurell & Daderman, 2005).
What is Chromis?

• Chromis is a treatment programme for male offenders with high levels of psychopathic traits

• It aims to reduce their risk of violence

• It is used in one unit of HMP Frankland

• It aims to help offenders to engage in treatment, find new and fulfilling ways to live pro-socially and achieve their goals without the use of violence

(Tew & Atkinson, 2013)
What is Chromis?

The 6 core principles of Chromis:

• Complex needs and personal relevance
• Control and choice
• Future focused
• Novelty and stimulation
• Collaboration and transparency
• Status and credibility
What is Chromis?

• These principles aim to enable psychopathic offenders to engage in treatment

• It also enables them to see a personal benefit in behavioural change and the reduction of violence

(Tew & Atkinson, 2013)
The Structure of Chromis

The 3 main components of Chromis:

• Motivation and Engagement
• Cognitive Skills (Creative Thinking, Problem Solving, Handling Conflict)
• Schema Therapy
Motivation and Engagement

• Consists of 12 individual sessions

• Focuses on understanding what offenders really care about and want, and how they usually achieve this

• Uses the Good Lives Model as a tool to identify underlying themes for each participant
Cognitive Skills

There are 3 cognitive skills components:

• Creative thinking
• Problem solving
• Handling conflict

• These are designed to meet the needs of psychopathic offenders, by being challenging and stimulating

• They will also provide them with ways to fulfil their life goals, without the use of violence
Cognitive Skills

These 3 components all work together to:

• Enable offenders to resolve problems, achieve goals, and make the most of opportunities

• Reduce boredom and monotony in offenders’ lives

• Helps offenders to pro-socially avoid and resolve conflict, and to develop negotiation skills
Schema Therapy

• Explores and addresses the development and maintenance of unhelpful schema, beliefs, and consequent behaviours

• Is delivered in 3 stages: formulation, change, and generalisation, practice and maintenance

(Tew & Atkinson, 2013)
Figure 1. An overview of the elements of Chromis.
Note: Grey-shaded areas are the Chromis components.
Does Chromis Work?

Research:

- Only one study investigating the results of Chromis
- Used 5 case study participants who had completed Chromis
- Found a reduction in self-reported anger and expected physical aggression, but there was a higher rate of verbal aggression than expected

(Tew, Dixon, Harkins & Bennett, 2012)
Does Chromis Work?

Evaluation:

• These results are promising but the increase in verbal aggression needs to be investigated

• Not enough time has passed to evaluate whether it reduces reoffending

• However, the use of techniques and principles that take into account participants’ psychopathic traits is unique and appears to an effective strategy

• Chromis is only run in one unit, in one prison. It is not known whether it would work elsewhere
Recommendations for the Future

• Continued research into the effectiveness of Chromis

• As more participants complete the programme, reoffending rates should be investigated

• Investigate its use for female offenders with high levels of psychopathy

• Identify whether this type of treatment would be useful for non-psychopathic offenders

• Consider the use of this programme in other prisons and institutions
Questions?


References


