

Scientific Evaluations of Counseling Programs Designed to Reduce Adverse Abortion-Related Outcomes

Only three scientific evaluations of abortion counseling programs have been published due to the fact that such studies are quite costly in terms of both time and financial resources. Typically these studies utilize an experimental approach with random assignment of participants to the treatment and control groups, pretests administered prior to treatment, and post-tests administered after. In many cases, there is also a follow-up evaluation to determine if effects of the treatment have persisted over time. The value of this type of study is in its ability to demonstrate *causation*. In other words, when participants in the treatment group improve on the dependent variables compared to participants in the control group, we can say with more confidence that the treatment has been effective in causing the observed changes.

The experimental studies published in scientific journals are summarized below:

Gordon, R.A. (1978). Efficacy of a group crisis-counseling program for men accompanying women seeking abortions. *Community Mental Health Journal*, 13 (4), 291-295.

This study involved 46 men who accompanied partners, friends, or daughters to an abortion clinic. One-half of the men received a single session of counseling while the others comprised the control group. Each session lasted approximately two hours and involved from three to seven men. Findings indicated that men who participated in the counseling sessions reported significantly less anxiety than men in the control group.

Coyle, C.T. & Enright, R.D. (1997). Forgiveness intervention with postabortion men. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 65 (6), 1042-1046.

This study utilized a twelve-week forgiveness therapy program with ten men who were randomly assigned to a treatment or a wait-list control condition. The program was administered on an individual basis. After participants in the treatment group completed the program, the control participants also received the intervention. In both groups, findings indicated that the treatment was efficacious with participants demonstrating increased forgiveness and reductions in anger, anxiety, and grief. A 12-week follow-up assessment confirmed lasting treatment effects.

Layer, S.D., Roberts, C. Wild, K. & Walters, J. (2004). Postabortion grief: Evaluating the possible efficacy of a spiritual group intervention. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 14 (5), 344-350.

In this study, sixteen women participated in a group program lasting one week-end while another group of 19 women participated in an 8-week-long intervention. Both programs were spiritual in nature. When they compared the efficacy of the two programs, investigators found that women in the week-end program demonstrated significant reductions in shame but not in trauma symptoms. Women participating in the 8-week program demonstrated significant reductions in both shame and trauma symptoms which suggests that trauma relief may require more time in treatment.

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