School-related Outcomes From a Randomized Controlled Trial of Adolescent Depression Prevention Programs

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Previous research has demonstrated the effectiveness of school-based depression prevention programs in reducing depressive symptoms and improving functioning. This study examined whether these programs have positive effects on school-related outcomes. Students at 10 middle and high schools in New Jersey were randomized to weekly sessions of Interpersonal Psychotherapy - Adolescent Skills Training (IPT-AST) or group counseling (GC). Analyses examined whether there were intervention effects on participants' grades, attendance rates, and disciplinary outcomes over approximately one year post-intervention. Although there were no significant main effects of intervention condition, moderation analyses indicated more favorable effects of IPT-AST among certain higher-risk subgroups (e.g., those from low-income families). Participants who experienced meaningful improvement in their depressive symptoms had significantly more positive outcomes on overall grades than those who did not experience meaningful improvement, regardless of intervention condition. Further research is needed to clarify the effects of depression prevention programs on these school-related outcomes.

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