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Use of a crisis protocol tool in the treatment of substance use disorders

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In the treatment of substance use disorders one of the main goals is to prevent relapse. Relapse is a process with different stages, and relapse prevention is a cognitive behavioural approach with the goal of identifying early stages of that process and preventing high risk situations. As a part of an intensive outpatient treatment program we have developed a tool called “crisis protocol” designed to provide the person with a road map every time a sign of relapse is identified. The “crisis protocol” has four components: make a call to a designated reference for that purpose; perform a relaxation exercise; to use a motivational flashcard with reasons not to consume; and carry out an action that is incompatible with the use of substances. All steps of the protocol are trained and put into practice in a group setting. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the tool in the treatment, we developed a weekly self-registration card in which patients record their use and state whether they used the crisis protocol. After a month, we collected the information provided by the patients and analyzed it to determine if the intervention had been successful in preventing substance use.

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