

Psychosocial interventions to modify lifestyle in cardiovascular patients: A Heart-Mind interdisciplinary approach

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BACKGROUND

Modification of psychosocial risk factors is an integral part of preventive cardiology. Through psychosocial interventions lifestyle changes can be facilitated with emphasis on the acquisition of purpose in life which may be associated with improved prognosis in cardiovascular disease.

PURPOSE

To examine the effect of interdisciplinary psychotherapeutic intervention in patients (pts) with increased cardiovascular risk.

PATIENTS AND METHODS

20 pts were studied (18M/2F), age 55±10, 35-70 years, 50% with a history of myocardial infarction, 50% with a diagnosis of hypertension and/or dyslipidemia. Patients participated in a psychotherapeutic-educational group (Heart-Mind) coordinated by a cardiologist trained in systemic therapy approach and a psychotherapist. Group members participated in 10 (two-hour) meetings twice per month. The topic of each meeting was chosen by the group coordinators and dealt with risk factors (stress, smoking, diet, relationships, anger, expression of emotions). For the initial stimulus individual drawing, music and listening to life scenes were used. Group Therapy (SCIT), Self-Help Group and Mindfulness-Type Relaxation techniques were used. At baseline and at the end of the cycle, group members completed the validated Purpose in Life Questionnaire (PILQ) and Resilience Questionnaire (RESQ). The TAT (Thematic Apperception Test) evaluation method was also used which is a valid projective test to reveal an individual's perception of interpersonal relationships.

RESULTS

There was a significant improvement in PILQ score comparing final vs baseline assessment (112±11 vs 104±14, p=0.014) (Figure 1A-1B). There was also a non-statistically significant trend towards an improvement in final vs baseline RESQ score (166±24 vs 156±25, p=0.113) (Figure 2A-2B). According to TAT qualitative analysis there was an impressive change in the participants stories. Instead of feeling incompetent, they revealed their anger and discomfort as they realized the pressing conditions of the context.

Figure 1

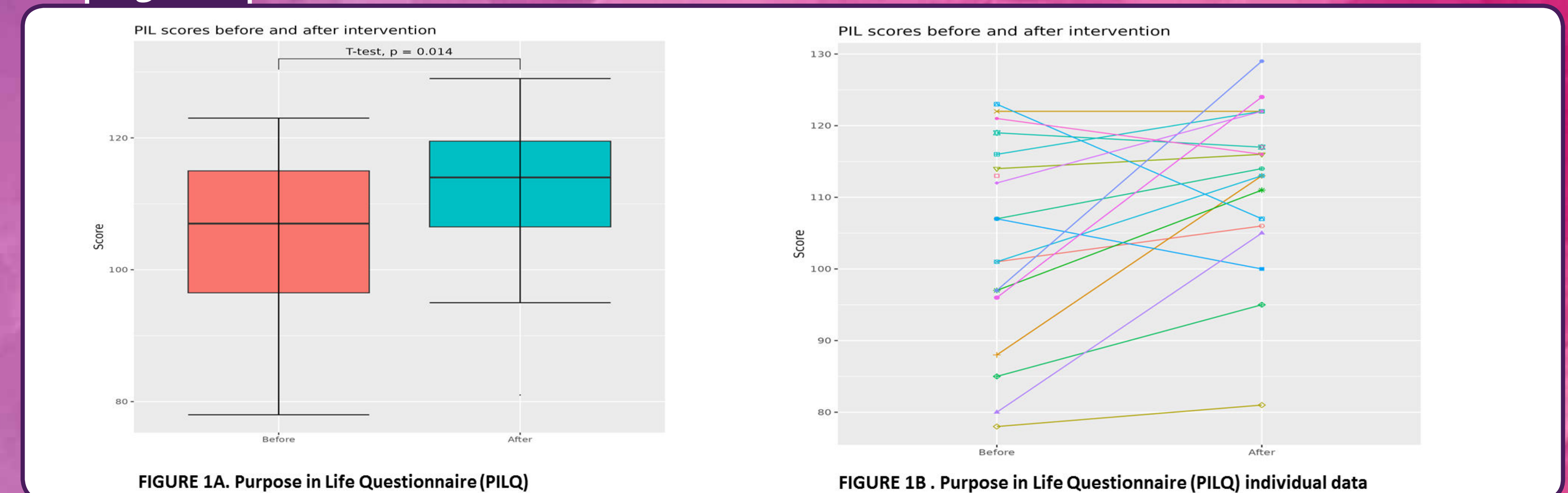


FIGURE 1A. Purpose in Life Questionnaire (PILQ)

FIGURE 1B. Purpose in Life Questionnaire (PILQ) individual data

Figure 2

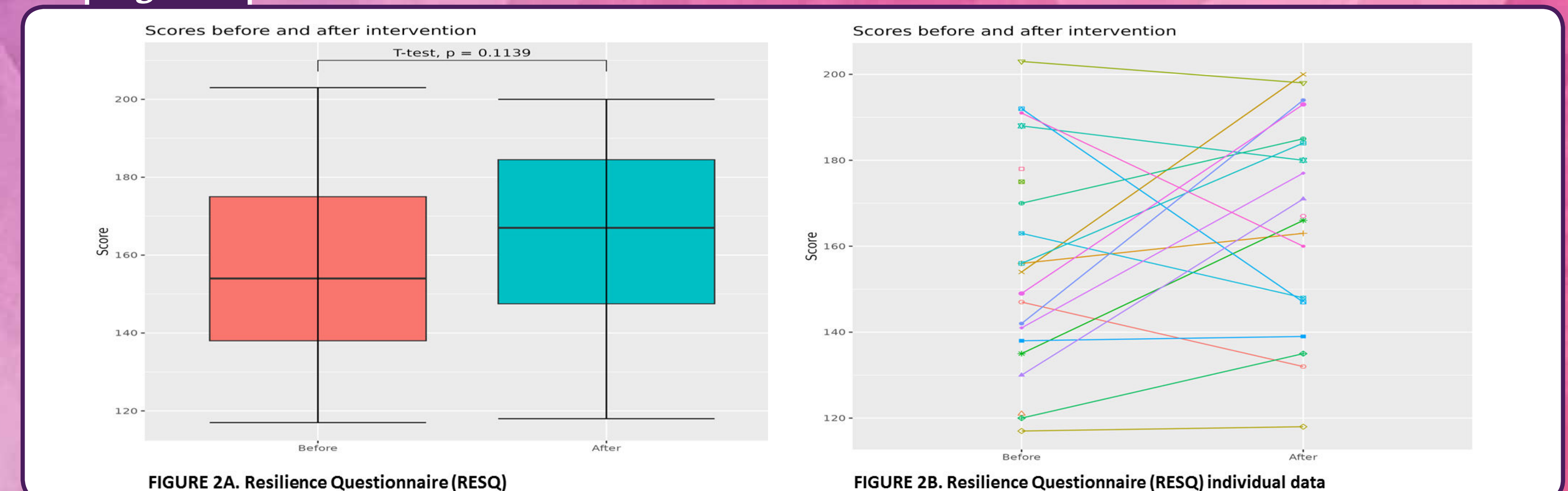


FIGURE 2A. Resilience Questionnaire (RESQ)

FIGURE 2B. Resilience Questionnaire (RESQ) individual data

CONCLUSION

Heart-Mind interdisciplinary approach in the form of group psychotherapy may be a valuable intervention to facilitate clinically important lifestyle changes in cardiovascular disease mainly via an enhanced sense of purpose in life. A Heart-Mind interdisciplinary approach may be introduced as a new method of psychosocial intervention as part of cardiac rehabilitation programs.

REFERENCES

Short-Term Intervention with the Synallactic Collective Image Technique (SCIT). Vassiliou, G.A., Vassiliou, V.G. (1985). Short-Term Intervention with the Synallactic Collective Image Technique. In: Pichot, P., Berner, P., Wolf, R., Thau, K. (eds) *Psychiatry the State of the Art*. Springer, Boston, MA. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4684-4697-511>

The PIL test is a 20-item self-report attitudinal scale designed to measure the extent to which a respondent perceives a general sense of meaning and purpose in life or respectively suffers from an "existential vacuum" (Frankl, (1959/1985). All questions range from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (7). This assessment is based on the work of Crumbaugh, J., & Maholick, L. (1964). An experimental study of existentialism: The psychometric approach to Frankl's concept of noogenic neurosis. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 20, 200-207.

Self-Evaluation-Resilience (How resilient are you?). The self-evaluation questionnaire consists of 21 questions - 3 for each of the seven categories or areas of development in the selection box. The seven categories are: perception, getting a grip of one's life, forming relationships, acceptance and optimistic thinking (confidence in future), orientation on solution and aims, healthy lifestyle, self-efficacy. <http://www.resilience-project.eu/index.php-id=29&L=10.html>