Abstract

The ideal interface between self-help group and professional being of both theoretical and practical interest, this paper reviews the conceptual underpining the interface issue and empirical studies in which the professional of self-help group member perspective on this issue was elicited or comparative analyses were conducted. Empirical studies measuring self-help group members' perceptions and studies of professionals' views indicate that professional interaction with self-help groups is desirable but that professional lack of information concerning self-help groups and lack of preparation for appropriate roles are perceived as barriers to such interaction. These studies clearly show that the indirect, non-authoritarian role of the professional as consultant receives the most support.

Consultation and collaboration are recurrent themes in the empirical investigations of professional interface with self-help groups. Balance and exchange theories could provide useful theoretical foundations for this collaboration practice. Clearly, educational
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Keywords
self-help groups; health professionals; practice; theory; education

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