Abstract

MODIFYING THE CRIMINALIZATION HYPOTHESIS:
PREDICTING JAIL DIVERSION OUTCOME WITH CLINICAL, CRIMINOLOGICAL, AND PERSONALITY FACTORS

by

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There are a disproportionate number of individuals with serious mental illness in the criminal justice system, compared to the general population. Mental health courts and jail diversion programs were developed to divert individuals with mental illness out of jails into community treatment to ease the overburden of treating psychiatric disorders in the criminal justice system. These programs have become increasingly popular, but little is known about the characteristics of the diverted individuals that result in successful outcomes. The purpose of this study is to test different causal models of recidivism as predicted by clinical, criminological, and personality variables, and examine the incremental validity of widely used clinical and risk assessment instruments over the screening instrument currently employed by diversion programs. Cox regression models do not support the strict interpretation of the criminalization hypothesis that treatment noncompliance is a result of clinical symptoms alone. Rather, treatment noncompliance is predicted by personality variables. Contrary to expectation, neither the Personality Assessment Inventory nor the Violence Risk Appraisal Guide, demonstrated incremental validity over the COMPAS for predicting noncompliance. In addition, the PAI antisocial personality features, substance abuse, and aggression scales, were associated with all forms of treatment noncompliance. Implications for practice were discussed.