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Impact of Expressed Emotion On the Course of Schizophrenia

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INTRODUCTION

The course of schizophrenia may vary as it depends on many factors. Expressed emotion of family members has a considerable role in the treatment process. Schizophrenia sufferers who are exposed to family environments characterized by a high level of criticism, hostility and emotional over-involvement demonstrate a higher rate of relapse.

OBJECTIVE

The study focused on the level of expressed emotion of family members of schizophrenia patients prior to and during their long-term hospitalization and how that affected the course of treatment.

METHOD

The retrospective study included 112 patients diagnosed with schizophrenia and their family members. The patients had been court-ordered to undergo psychiatric treatment for a crime they committed. The following scales were used to assess the level of expressed emotion: Five minute Speech Sample (FMSS), Level of Expressed Emotional Scale (LEE), Family Attitude Scale (FAS) and Perceived Criticism (PC). Socio-demographic parameters were also used in the research.

RESULTS

The results show that expressed emotion of family members was high before and during long-term hospitalization of 71.4% of patients who experienced clinical worsening. This is particularly true for parents (62.5%), and more frequently for mothers. Course of the illness was better in the group of patients whose family members had low expressed emotion.

CONCLUSION

Successful treatment and favourable outcome of schizophrenia depend on the quality of relationship between the patient and his family members. High level of expressed emotion is one of the risk factors for relapse in schizophrenia.