

FC06-04

"HELP-S FOR CHILDREN" - RESULTS OF A MULTICENTRE STUDY ABOUT THE SITUATION OF FAMILIES WITH A MENTALLY ILL PARENT

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Introduction: 26.5% of psychiatric patients in Germany have minor children. More than half of these children have specific needs, which are seldom met.

Objectives/aims: To examine problems, needs and used interventions for families with a mentally ill parent in the federal state of Saxony, Germany. The study focused on outpatients and included mothers and fathers and all psychiatric disorders.

Methods: We asked all psychiatrists in the federal state of Saxony to take part in our study. All patients with minor children who came to one of the 58 participating psychiatrist's practices at an appointed date were asked to fill out a detailed questionnaire including sociodemographic data, the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), specific needs, used interventions and reasons for not using interventions. The questionnaire was developed using data from 26 expert interviews.

Results: 128 psychiatric outpatients took part in our study (78% female). The most common diagnoses were depression and anxiety disorders. More than 40% of the patients rated their children in the SDQ in an abnormal or borderline range. 22% of the children have been treated because of emotional or behavioural problems. Reasons not to use interventions were missing knowledge and fear of stigmatisation.

Conclusions: HELP-S for children is the first study which examines the situation of children with a mentally ill parent in an outpatient setting. Therefore, our results are an improvement in research in the field of families with a mentally ill parent and heading towards the improvement of care.