

GROUP PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL INTERVENTION FOR PARENTS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH SCHIZOPHRENIA AND PARENTS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH AYTISM: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Introduction: Families of individuals with schizophrenia and autism experience similar stressors in their everyday life. Research shows that working with families of people with schizophrenia is effective in reducing family burden and distress levels, through structured psychoeducational interventions. These interventions are delivered in individual family or group family design. However, psychoeducational interventions have not been widely implemented in standard clinical practice, while there is limited research on the effectiveness of psychoeducation in parents of children with autism.

Objectives: Psychoeducational interventions are organized around two primary objectives:

- a) provision of information about the nature and treatment of the disorder and
- b) teaching family members problem-solving, communication skills and behavior management techniques.

Aim: The aim of this study was to compare and contrast the efficacy of group psychoeducational intervention in reducing family burden and in improving communication and problem solving skills, when applied to two groups of parents of individuals with schizophrenia and of children with autism.

Methods: Eight parents of individuals with schizophrenia and six parents of children with autism participated in two group psychoeducational programs. Twenty three group sessions were conducted for each group. Pre and post treatment measures included qualitative assessment of knowledge about the nature of the disorder of their offspring and social stigma, as well as psychometric measurement of family burden, family rituals, family communication and general family functioning.

Results and conclusions: Quantitative and qualitative data on the effectiveness of each group psychoeducational intervention, as well comparative data between the two groups will be discussed.