

Abstract

In Eastern European Countries like Romania there is not a constant professional awareness for needs of mental health prevention in children of somatically ill parents and it turned to be an important endeavour to investigate the mental health state of children having acute central nervous system injured parents.

The aim was to evaluate and compare the data concerning types and frequencies of mental health problems in children, to specify interaction modalities of specific risks and protective factors, to evaluate attitudes toward preventive interventions, as well as to evaluate an innovative family counselling intervention in an experimental controlled trial.

Data from 58 families were collected. The instruments used aimed to measure patient's current physical state (Karnofsky-Index), healthy parent health related quality of life (SF-8), degree of healthy parent depression (BDI), family functioning (FAD), emotional and behavioural problems in children and adolescents (CBCL, YSR), and opinion on intervention (FBB).

Results showed that children of parents affected by central nervous system injury present significantly more mental health problems as compared to a reference population. Prevalent data show the fact that mental health problems are mainly reported within the internalizing spectrum. Objective disease characteristics seemed to have only little impact. However, the depression of the healthy parent comes along with high scores in children's mental health problems. Family dysfunction as a whole positively correlates with psychological symptoms in children, and four sub dimensions of family functioning predicted children's problems, namely affective responsiveness, affective involvement, roles and communication. The set of variables, which could best predict psychological problems of children are healthy parent's health related quality of life (physical) - SF-8, healthy parent depression – BDI, and affective involvement subscale – FAD. Furthermore, a tendency was revealed according to which those receiving counselling intervention have had a good evolution over time and that dialogic “face-to face” interventions through counselling sessions seemed to be more

effective in reducing children's stress symptoms than psycho educative advices and recommendations by a written brochure.