

Mothers of deaf children: Mental health and emotional supports needs

NHS 2008. Italy, Milan, June 19-21, 2008.

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Abstract

Aim of the study: The aim of this study was to identify the relation between mental health status and emotional support needs of the mothers of hearing impaired children.

Background: Having a hearing impaired child can be an over whelming situation parent. Especially mothers of hearing impaired children often experience high levels of parenting stress. Family support may help to alleviate stress and support mothers in coping. To support these parents, information is required regarding the types of support they need and whether their needs are met. However, mothers' perceptions of their specific emotional support needs and whether or not these needs are being met have not often been explored.

Design: A cross-sectional survey was conducted in Tehran with 50 mothers of first grade hearing impaired children who were registered in a special school for the hearing impaired children, an average age of them were 7 years. 85% of the children had more than 70 dB hearing loss and none of them had any other disability.

Measures: Maternal mental health was assessed with SCL-90 and GHQ questionnaires which are instruments widely used to assess mental health status. For the evaluation of emotional support needs, two measures were used. First, mothers completed a researcher-made family needs questionnaire. Second, they were presented and open-ended question: "Please list your five greatest needs as a mother". Sociodemographic information included mental age and education, child age and gender, family size house hold characteristics (single parent or not), vocational status of mothers, and family financial resources. According to the several indicators of mental health status, mothers report high levels of stress, depression and anxiety.

Results: mothers report high levels of stress, depression and anxiety. There were a strong relation between spousal support needs and the mental status of mothers; the less they had spousal support the more severe (???) were their depression, stress and emotional symptoms. All of the mothers attach a high premium to the availability of spousal support. The need of gaining correct and enough information regarding their

children's hearing loss and also community based support systems were reported.

Conclusions: Most of the mothers had various support needs that were frequently unmet. Service providers should especially aim at providing information, activities, mother's mental health care and parental counseling. Furthermore they need to be informed about where and how they can obtain what kind of support. These findings support the need for strengthening several family resources especially spousal support. The continuation of research efforts in these directions will allow to gain a better understanding of the mental health status and needs of mothers of hearing impaired children and to better than get the interventions that will refer them.