

## The Importance of Psychoeducation for Caregivers of People with Schizophrenia

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### ABSTRACT

Schizophrenia is considered as one of the most difficult mental illnesses. In numerous studies it has been reported that caregivers or family members of patients with schizophrenia tend to go through a major distress. In this review, we look at the literature which is available with regards to the effectiveness of Psychoeducating caregivers of patients with schizophrenia, in order to help them cope with caregiver burden and hence, help avoid relapse in the patients.

**Keywords:** Caregiver, Coping, Psychoeducation, Schizophrenia

In this article, *caregiver* denotes an individual who provides care and is a family member or a relative of the patient, rather than a professional who is reimbursed for services.

Psychoeducation (PE) is defined as an intervention to transfer a structured knowledge systematically for an illness and its treatment. This intervention is integrated with emotional and motivational aspects to enable patients or caregivers to cope with the illness and to improve its treatment adherence and efficacy. PE is considered an important component of a treatment process in both medical and psychiatric disorders (Ekhtiari, Rezapour, Aupperle & Paulus, 2017). A psychoeducation programme is basically a strategy that teaches the families of the clients and their caregivers about the disorder, the treatments, coping strategies and other available resources and is based on the observation and people can be participants in their own role of care by removing the knowledge deficits (Mericle, 1999).

Schizophrenia is a severe form of mental illness that causes psychosis where the person is not in touch with reality and is associated with considerable numbers of disability which affects all areas of their lives, which includes personal, family, social, educational, and occupational functioning. Schizophrenia is characterised by significant impairments in the way reality is perceived and results also in changes in behaviour. It has been found that more than 66% of people with psychosis in the world do not receive a proper mental health care. Factors such as stigma, discrimination and violation of human rights of people with schizophrenia are prevalent (WHO, 2022). According to an article that drew literature and studies across various parts of the world, it showed that despite cultural variation in a society, evidences showed that family burdens are significantly present and these burdens

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were experienced by family caregivers in various parts of the world. Family caregivers' burden is a global issue and it needs to be addressed for the wellbeing of the society (Wai-Chi Chan, 2011). This article presents preliminary results of an ongoing research along with some research and studies that shows that psychoeducating the caregivers about the illness uplifts the burden to a certain degree.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A study to evaluate the effectiveness of psychoeducation program for Chinese clients with Schizophrenia and their caregivers was conducted and it was found that psychoeducation intervention had positive effects on these clients and their caregivers. In their study it was suggested that in order to substantiate its effects, psychoeducation should be an ongoing intervention and constantly evaluating its outcomes. In this study it was suggested that in order to substantiate its effects, psychoeducation should be an ongoing intervention, with its outcomes constantly evaluated. (Chan et al., 2009). As a result of the high proportion of family members providing care to persons with schizophrenia and the high rates of burden reported by these caregivers, researchers have attempted to identify predictors of family burden and to design family interventions that reduce the negative consequences of caring for persons with schizophrenia (Pariante&Carpiniello, 1996).

In another research it was found that the caregivers' psychological distress was high and the study suggested that interventions with family caregivers of a relative with Schizophrenia should include giving attention to the mental health of the family caregivers as an addition to the recovery of the patient (Shah, Sultan, Faisal & Irfan, 2013), where a family psychoeducation about the illness seems to be one way of giving the attention to the mental health of the family. As a result of another study conducted by Lehman and Steinwachs, 1998, it was found that family psychoeducation and support interventions are considered a best practice in the treatment of schizophrenia.

A study on schizophrenia caregivers, also suggested that Psycho-educational intervention programmes should target the specific needs of the family caregivers. By having these programmes framed depending on their age and kinship relationship of the caregiver with the Schizophrenia patient (Margetic et al., 2013). Another study showed the effectiveness of an intervention program designed for caregiver burden, and it showed that they are consistent with those of other studies. The intervention conducted has reduced caregivers' burden in all three areas, which are burden, rejection and incompetence (Maldonado & Urizar, 2007). In studying the psychological distress of caregivers of Schizophrenia, it was found that the current interventions help with reducing the psychiatric symptoms of the patient and also have an impact on lowering the stress level of the caregivers (Shah, Sultan, Faisal & Irfan, 2013).

### DISCUSSION

The patients, as a result of their illness, need constant attention and care which consequently impacts the psychological health of the person providing care and the caregivers therefore experience burden and psychological distress at similar levels in all cultures (Magana, Garcia, Hernandez & Cortez, 2007). In a study on the burden of family caregivers, it was found that their low quality of life (QOL) was a result of their emotional reactions to the illness and the stress of coping with the relatives' disturbed behaviour, which includes the disruption of the daily household routine. Not only that, the stress was also because they had to cope with the stigma they are confronted and surrounded with, restriction in social and leisure activities, and economic difficulties as they had to meet the expenses of the treatment

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of their relative (Rossler, Salize, Van & Reicher, 2005). According to a study among Latino family caregivers, Variables like age of caregiver, relation with patient, female gender, duration of care giving, low educational level and employment status are found to be significantly associated with stress and burden of the caregivers (Magana, et al, 2007 & Yousafzai, et al, 2008). Even though the prevalence of Schizophrenia is not as high, it is considered to be among the most burdensome and high-cost illnesses across the world, therefore finance becomes another major source of stress for the caregiver (Rossler, Salizeb, Os&Riecher-Roslerd, 2005).

Demands of caregiving from the caregivers by the schizophrenia patients include financial support for psychiatric treatment, a constant supervision of a family member, mentally dealing with societal stigma associated with mental illness, and emotional distress that may result from symptoms of a family member's illness. In a comparative study it was found that the level of burden experienced by caregivers of persons with schizophrenia is equivalent to that of caregivers of persons with other neurological and physical disorders (Biegel, Sales, & Schulz, 1991) In another study on patient functioning and family burden and psychoeducation, it was found that even in developed countries, only 10% of caregivers received psychological support when a relative is ill and due to these lack of services, it added to the sufferings of the caregivers (Magliano, Fiorillo, Malangone, De Rosa & Maj, 2006).

A present study intends to explore the stress and burden of caregivers of Schizophrenia, in the north-eastern part of the country specifically in Kohima, Nagaland. In this ongoing research, the preliminary data results show that majority of the caregivers experience moderate to high levels of burden (Nyekha & Ghildyal, 2023). Which also is an indication that there is a need for the primary caregivers to learn some effective ways to cope with the stress that comes along with the role that they play as a caregiver.

### CONCLUSION

The prior studies have also generally indicated that Psychoeducation programs have a positive outcome which includes reducing relapse. Psychoeducation programmes are considered one of the effective psychological interventions which are suggested to help the caregivers and also the clients. It can be concluded that, there is a possibility of better treatment outcome by implementing Psychoeducation at the community level as a necessity and as part of a treatment plan for better coping of caregiver stress and burden, which will consequently help with the recovery of the patient.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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