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Title: 'A nation-wide staff training program for family psychoeducation in severe mental illness'

Background: Despite all the evidence regarding its cost-effectiveness, psychoeducational family interventions for non-organic psychotic disorders are still not steadily applied in everyday routine practice. In Portugal, these interventions are seldom used, even in well-staffed psychiatric departments. Following the recommendations of the Portuguese National Mental Health Plan, a psychoeducational training program has been prepared by the Ministry of Health.

Objectives: a) to conduct a psychoeducational training program on a national basis and b) to evaluate obstacles to implementation in routine practice.

Methods: Professionals from public mental health services across the Country attended a 3 days full-time program in which they were trained in the psychoeducational intervention through presentation of guidelines, demonstrative audios and role-playing.

Results: The trainees' acquisition of skills was found very satisfactory. The most prevalent barriers in the implementation of the intervention included work overload, the difficulty to integrate family work with other duties, and the poor allowance of time from the service to run the intervention on a regular basis.

Conclusions: Measures should be taken in order to cope with obstacles limiting the use of family interventions in practice, including changes in the services governance and increased autonomy for professionals involved in the process.