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e-Poster walk: Child and adolescent psychiatry – Part 5

EW0576

Parenting a child with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: Qualitative study from a developing nation, India

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Introduction Like elsewhere, studies from developing countries suggest that parents of children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) report significant stress. Besides symptoms, parental stress stems from experiences in interpersonal, schooling and societal domains, which may in turn be influenced by socio-cultural factors. This is a highly under-studied area.

Objectives and aims Exploring experiences in familial, schooling and societal areas amongst Indian parents and understanding these in a cultural context using experiential qualitative research methodology.

Methods In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with consenting parents of 27 children diagnosed with ADHD (17 mothers; 10 fathers).

Results All parents reported experiencing moderate to high degree of stress, feeling worried and frustrated due to child's problems. 19 parents reported being "short-tempered", while 1 mother expressed feeling "lost". Majority reported strained relations with spouse and extended family. Mothers reported higher stress, more difficulties in family life, faced criticism from immediate family and community regarding handling of child, felt more embarrassment, guilt and sense of failure as a mother. Half of the parents avoided attending social gatherings. Other than 2 parents, all had negative experiences with schooling. Experiential descriptions included those of teachers being highly critical of child and parents, punitive, dismissive and discriminatory. Teacher had advised seeking treatment in only 6 children. Themes of blame, discrimination and rejection were identified.

Conclusions We conclude that cultural factors such as stigma, blaming of parent (especially mother) and lack of knowledge regarding ADHD amongst teachers and society may be responsible for these experiences and needs further investigation.

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Parental causal explanations and treatment seeking in attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: Perspectives from a developing nation based on process theory

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Introduction Cultural factors have an important role in causal model of symptoms, threshold for treatment seeking and acceptability of professional help in ADHD.

Objectives and aims To explore causal explanations and treatment seeking amongst parents of children with ADHD and understand these in context of a largely collectivistic culture as in India.

Methods In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 27 consenting parents; data interpreted using process theory.

Results Initial reaction to psychiatric referral revealed themes of disbelief/surprise, feeling confused/offended and lag of 6–36 months to consultation. Parents most commonly attributed causality to psychosocial reasons (lack of motivation/volitional, inadequate disciplining), while few gave one or more biomedical explanations (epilepsy, brain damage, low birth weight, nutritional deficiency, maternal ill health, low intelligence) alone or with a psychosocial reason. Despite the initial reaction, all but 1 parent was relieved with medical explanation, accepted diagnosis, and perceived need for treatment. Most parents were willing to start/continue medication if doctor suggested so as "he/she would know the best". All parents expressed that counseling was needed.

Conclusions Initial reactions and delay in treatment seeking is understood in light of cultural attitudes towards mental illnesses and psychiatric consultation in developing nations. More importantly, despite initial reluctance, most parents accepted biomedical explanation and treatment. The doctor patient relationship modeled on a guru-chela relation of complete trust in authority can explain this process change. We conclude that cultural attitudes not only influence causal models and initial treatment seeking, but also modify process of help seeking.