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PARENTAL BURDEN OF MENTALLY ILL IN-PATIENTS ASSESSED

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Aim: About a third of all inpatients in psychiatric hospitals are parents of children aged below 18 years. The mental illness of a parent and especially the need of inpatient treatment burdens families. This study was contributed to assess parental stress, behavioural and emotional problems of the children and the desires of psychiatric inpatients for support. Barriers and obstacles as well as positive experience with support for their children were assessed.

Method: All psychiatric hospitals in a county with about 1.5 million inhabitants in South-West Germany participated in this study. From 643 inpatients after drop-out 83 (54 female, 29 male) patients with non full aged children were questioned with inventories as the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), the Parental Stress Scael (PSS) and further assessments.

Results: Parents reported about an increased level of stress by parenthood (PSS mean 41.9, SD 9.4). Psychopathology of the children influenced the stress of the mentally ill parents. Although an increased level of parental stress was quoted, patients avoided professional support.

Conclusion: Our results prove the high negative attitude of mentally ill parents against youth welfare service which must be reduced by active information policy and offers in collaboration with the treating psychiatrist of the parents to reduce parental burden.