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A GROUP PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL INTERVENTION FOR PARENTS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH SCHIZOPHRENIA

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Introduction: Families of individuals with schizophrenia experience disempowerment and helplessness because of unique stressors in their everyday life, mainly derived from the positive and negative symptoms of the illness (Bauml, et al., 2006). Another line of research provides evidence that working with families of people with schizophrenia is effective in reducing family burden and distress levels, through structured psychoeducational interventions (Falloon, 2003; Bauml, et al., 2006).

Objectives, aims: Despite evidence of their efficacy, psychoeducational interventions have not been widely implemented in standard clinical practice. The goal of this ongoing research project is to investigate the efficacy of a group psychoeducational intervention for parents of individuals with schizophrenia in reducing family burden and in improving their communication and problem solving skills, as well as their general family functioning.

Methods: The theoretical foundations of family psychoeducation is mainly derived from behavioral family therapy. Four couples (all parents of one or two individuals with schizophrenia) participated in this psychoeducational intervention program. Twenty three group sessions were conducted, organized around three primary goals: a) provision of information about the nature and the treatment of schizophrenia b) management of social and self-stigmatization and c) teaching family members problem-solving and communication skills (Solomon, 2000).

Results and conclusions: Pre and post treatment measures, as well as direct measures during treatment, were used to quantitatively assess family burden, family rituals, knowledge about the nature of the disorder, coping with stigma, communication and problem solving skills and general family functioning. Findings will be discussed.