

Title of Intervention: Therapy for Children with Asthma and their Families

Intervention Strategies: Supportive Relationships

Purpose of the Intervention: To improve families' ability to cope with asthma

Population: Children ages 6-15 with severe asthma and their families

Setting: Pediatric Outpatient Department of the University Hospital, Linköping, Sweden; health care facility-based

Partners: Hospital administrators and staff

Intervention Description:

- Supportive Relationships: Participant families received family therapy sessions from two experienced therapists over the course of eight months. Family therapy was defined as treatment of the entire family or parts of it. Psychological and pedagogical methods aimed at changing interpersonal relations. The therapists called attention to and tried to change dysfunctional patterns of family interaction, explored the role of the asthma symptoms in the family system, tried to reveal hidden conflicts, strengthened boundaries between individuals and between parents and children and tried to enhance communication about the emotional impact of the disease on the family members.

Theory: Not mentioned

Resources Required:

- Staff/Volunteers: Therapists, facilitators
- Training: Not mentioned
- Technology: Not mentioned
- Space: Meeting space
- Budget: Not mentioned
- Intervention: Not mentioned
- Evaluation: Clinical exam, access to hospital records, diaries

Evaluation:

- Design: Randomized controlled trial
- Methods and Measures:
 - Clinical exam by pediatric allergist
 - Hospital records recorded emergency room visits and emergency inpatient services
 - Diaries assessed symptoms, medication, patient compliance and peak expiratory

Outcomes:

- Short Term Impact: Not measured
- Long Term Impact: The intervention group had improved clinical exams during the course of the study. The children who only received conventional medical treatment showed no significant change in asthma symptoms.

Maintenance: Not mentioned

Lessons Learned: The more competent and secure the parents and children feel in handling the asthma symptoms at home, the less anxiety will be added to other precipitating factors in an ongoing attack. As a result, the risk for severe attacks demanding hospitalization will be less. Family therapy seems to improve severe bronchial asthma in children and should be considered in the treatment of these cases.

Citation(s):

Gustafsson, P. A., N. I. Kjellman, et al. (1986). "Family therapy in the treatment of severe childhood asthma." *J Psychosom Res* 30(3): 369-74.