

Stress and Overload in Mothers and Fathers of Hospitalized Children: A Comparative Study

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Abstract : The hospitalization process for long periods and the experience of invasive and painful clinical procedures can trigger a set of stressors in children, family members and professionals, leading to stress. Mothers are, in general, the main caregivers and, therefore, have a high degree of sadness and stress with an impact on mental health. However, the father, in the face of the mother's absence, needs to assume other responsibilities such as domestic activities and healthy children in addition to work activities. In addition, he has to deal with changes in family and work relationships during the child's hospitalization, with disagreements and changes in the relationship with the partner, changes in the relationship with the children, and finding it difficult to reconcile the new tasks as a caregiver and work. A consequence of the hospitalization process is the interruption of the routine activities of both the child and the family members responsible for the care, who can go through stressful moments due to the consequences of family breakdown, attention focused only on the child and sleepless nights. In this sense, both the mother and the father can have their health affected by their child's hospitalization. The present study aims to compare the prevalence of stress and overload in mothers and fathers of hospitalized children, as well as possible associations with activities related to care. The participants were 10 fathers and 10 mothers of children hospitalized in a hospital located in a medium-sized city in the interior of São Paulo. Three instruments were used for data collection: 1) Script to characterize the participants; 2) The Lipp Stress Symptom Inventory (ISSL, 2000) 3) Zarit Burden Interview Protocol - ZBT. Contact was made with the management of the hospital in order to present the objectives of the project, then authorization was requested for the participation of the parents; after an agreement, the time and place were convenient for the participant to carry out the interview. Thus, they signed the Free and Informed Consent Term. Data were analyzed according to the instrument application manuals and organized in Figures and Tables. The results revealed that fathers and mothers have their family and professional routine affected by the hospitalization of their children, with the consequent presence of stress and overload indicators. However, the study points to a greater presence of stress and overload in mothers due to their role as the main caregiver, often interrupting their professional life to exercise care. In the case of the father, the routine is changed due to taking on household chores and taking care of the other children, with the professional life being less affected. It is hoped that the data can guide future interventions that promote and develop strategies that favor care and, at the same time, preserve the health of caregivers and that include mothers and fathers, considering that both are affected, albeit in a different way.

Keywords : stress, overload, caregivers, parents

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