

Building Skills of Carers of People with Eating Disorders : An Example of Multidisciplinary Team Work

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Introduction: Eating disorders (ED) are serious chronic illnesses associated with significant physical, psychological, and social impacts. They are in the ten leading causes of non mortality-related burden of disease within young Australian women and because the age of onset is typically adolescence or early adulthood, individuals who suffer from ED often rely upon a carer such as a parent or spouse for assistance with their recovery. Literature identified that caring for an individual with an ED is associated with significant burden. As a result, Treasure, Smith, & Crane (2007) have developed a 6 session carer skill-building workshop designed to improve carers' well-being, coping strategies, and problem-solving skills.

Objectives: The aims of the project were to measure the impact of participating in a structured skill-building workshop on coping mechanisms of carers, their emotional involvement, and their wellbeing.

Methods: Treasure et al. (2007) skill-building workshop was conducted collaboratively between an occupational therapist and a psychologist with 15 carers in Geelong, Australia. Participants completed a series of surveys (Brief Cope Questionnaire, General Health Questionnaire, Eating Disorders Impact Scale, Family Questionnaire) at pre-and post-intervention and 6 week after completion of the workshop. Data were analysed by conducting repeated ANOVAS.

Results: Results indicated a reduction of maladaptive coping ($p=.054$), a significant increase in adaptive coping mechanisms ($p<.01$), a significant diminution of participants' emotional overinvolvement ($p<.05$), improvements in participants' well-being, and improved confidence that their loved one could change and improve their overall functioning.

Conclusion : The results of this study demonstrated that this skill-building workshop has significant impacts on carers' well-being and level of burden and support further studies.

Contribution to practice : The results of this study contributed to strengthen the importance of family oriented intervention. Results highlight the relevance of interprofessional team work and take occupational therapy outside the more traditional grounds of direct clients' interventions by providing an example of an occupational therapist's contribution to research and to family interventions.

Reference:

Treasure, J., Smith, G., & Crane, A. (2007). Skills-based learning for caring for a loved one with an eating disorder. The new Maudsley method. London: Routledge.