Family-to-family support program for caregivers of adults with mental illness

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Chronic mental disorders adversely affect patients and their families alike and they have become a major cause of stress. Schizophrenia patients often live with their families and therefore they have a significant part in the care and treatment of the patient. Families of individuals with schizophrenia are primarily responsible for the care of patient. Therefore schizophrenia is stressful not only for patients, but also for family members. Families need information and support for cope with their stressful situation. It was shown that in families of patients with chronic mental illnesses, coping strategies used for dealing with problems while providing care are often insufficient. It was further indicated that effective interventions are needed to improve the mental health status of family caregivers. However, family interventions are applied only when families participate in research and some families can only receive services after the patient is hospitalized. The fact that family interventions are not a part of the practices carried out by healthcare workers has led to the emergence of family-to-family support programs. The family to family support program was a community based structured support program developed by Joyce Burland in 1990 in order to provide peer information and support for the family members. A family to family support program allows emotions, thoughts and information on coping with a family member experiencing a psychiatric disease to be shared. In these programs, volunteer family members are trained by healthcare workers, and they, in turn, train other family members. During these programs, families can interact with other families in similar situations, evaluate their own lives with a different outlook, and can share their experiences. The program creates an environment for the caregivers where they can share their burden and make recommendations to each other. In the family to family support program, caregivers find the opportunity to express themselves, look into their problems from different perspectives, discuss coping strategies and receive information about the illness. This allows caregivers to cope better with the difficulties they experience. The supportive interaction provided by peer groups makes a positive impact on the individual and plays a protective role against pressure and various stresses. It is reported that with the family to family support program, caregivers have increased levels of knowledge about the causes and treatment of mental illness, can better cope with difficulties experienced, have less negative feelings, increased social support and reduced anxiety about the patient.

Biography
Kerime Bademli is a PhD, MS and an Assistant Professor of Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing in the Faculty of Nursing at Akdeniz University in Turkey. She completed Bachelor of Nursing and Master of Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing at Akdeniz University in Turkey. She also completed her PhD from Dokuz Eylül University. Her research has been focusing on schizophrenia, schizophrenia family, caregiver, psychological stress and coping. She is an experienced nurse academic who has taught at undergraduate and postgraduate levels and has supervised/co-supervised students undertaking Master’s degrees. From 2002, she worked at the Akdeniz University Faculty of Nursing. She is serving as an Editorial Board Member of three journals of health sciences.

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