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QUALITY OF LIFE OF PRINCIPAL CAREGIVERS OF AUTISTIC CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS VISITING HEALTH FACILITIES IN LUCKNOW CITY, UTTAR PRADESH, INDIA

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Background: Autism is a neuro developmental disorder with core features of impaired social interaction, impaired communication, and restricted and repetitive interests and activities. Parents of children with Autistic Disorder may find themselves burdened with a lifelong responsibility of caring for their children and diminished attention to their own health. Other than this, lack of knowledge about autism, lack of treatment, and if treatment is available it is unaffordable, adds on the stress. This leads to deterioration of quality of life of parents in several domains like affected social life, increased physical, emotional and psychological stress, family clashes and affected married life.

Objectives: To study the Quality of Life of Principal Caregivers of Autistic children and adolescents visiting health facilities in Lucknow city.

Method: Purposive sampling method was used. The sample included 90 principal caregivers (aged < 60 years) of autistic children and adolescents aged 3 to 19 years and diagnosed with autism, attending government and private health facilities providing treatment for autism in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India.

Result: The quality of life of principal caregivers was found to be influenced most in the physical health domain (with least score). The caregivers with good score in environmental health domain had better knowledge regarding Autism. Place of Residence influenced the Psychological and Environmental health of principal caregivers. The predictors of quality of life of principal caregivers were Type of family and Knowledge regarding child's problem.

Conclusion and Recommendations: Knowledge regarding Autism predicted the overall quality of life of principal caregivers. Thus, there is an immense need of increasing awareness through IEC materials, Mass Media, discussions etc. regarding Autism. The caregivers should be counselled about the importance of joint families in improving their quality of life.

Biography

Aparna Jain is an upcoming public health specialist from India. Presently she is pursuing junior residency for the degree of MD from the Department of Community medicine and Public Health, King George's Medical University, Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow, India.

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