



Barriers in the search for social support for families with addiction problems

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Background: Alcohol and drug abuse is a social phenomenon that generates great concern over the different negative consequences on the emotional and physical health of those who live closely with this problem. Research results indicate that the availability of social support resources for these families is related to a higher level of wellbeing. However, there are different factors limiting their access to services and to the different sources of formal and informal support.

Aims: To analyse what the factors are that prevent relatives from seeking help for physical and psychological health problems that appear as consequences of coping with the substance abuse of a relative.

Methods: The families interviewed were contacted through specialised treatment agencies and from the community itself (n=100). The information was analysed following a qualitative approach according to the Grounded Theory. The main category for this work was the social support received by the family, with emphasis on the factors that prevent them from seeking social support.

Results: Nearly half of the relatives interviewed had never sought professional help. The reasons for that are different and interrelated going from an individual micro level to a wider macro social context, which includes cultural aspects related to myths, traditions, beliefs and values around the notion of gender and family. These concepts define the patterns of action followed to solve the problem.

Conclusions: It is important for the health system to acknowledge the characteristics and needs of these families in order to offer better attention alternatives.

Keywords: social support, family, addictions, Mexico.

Mental health services utilisation among Mexican female victims of violence

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Background: Domestic violence has been recognised as a major public health problem in Mexico due to its high prevalence and consequences such as emotional disorders, deterioration of relations among family members and higher risk for substance abuse, among others. These problems are more evident within the low-income population.

Aims: To analyse health services utilisation patterns in a sample of female victims of violence.

Methods: Information was gathered through a household survey, the standard questionnaire used included several sections of the CIDI, as well a section about the utilisation and perception of mental health care services.

Results: The prevalence of the women suffering some form of domestic violence was of 38.4%, only 13.3% of them had sought some type of help. General practitioners, homeopaths and religious ministers were the service providers most frequently consulted. Considering attendance to formal care (physicians, psychologists and psychiatric nurses) only 9.6% reported use of such services. Participants reported the need for help (87%), constant crying (70.6%) and feeling nervous (65.2%) as the main reasons to seek help, whereas reasons for not seeking help were to think that the problem would be solved eventually without help (80.4%) and to think it did not deserve attention (51.5%).

Conclusions: The results are consistent with previous studies that report under-utilisation of health

services by victims of violence. The observed low rate may be related to several factors such as perception of health care resources and culture bound perception of violence as normal trait of male behaviour.

Keywords: domestic violence, mental health, service utilisation, México

