

Needs, current clinical practices, and support for family caregivers in adult psychiatry in the French speaking part of Switzerland: An assessment study.

Research subject

Informal caregivers (ICs) in adult psychiatry are subject to important burden. Over the last half-century, in a context of deinstitutionalisation of psychiatric services, ICs and other health system protagonists have been increasingly obliged to collaborate to ensure an appropriate health itinerary. Those who used to be considered as a causal agent of mental illness eventually became unquestioned allies to mental health (MH) professionals. Nevertheless, the willingness of MH system to maintain patients in community and integrate family into the care process may considerably increase their responsibilities, and, thus, the burden.

Supporting ICs in particularly challenging stages of illness may be a solution to the need of care in a context of healthcare professionals' shortage. A diversity of support is in place in Switzerland. However, no overview nor assessment is currently available. Thus, it is not known if the offering is adequate with regards to the needs.

Specific aims

1. To assess current support offering to ICs in psychiatry in the French-speaking part of Switzerland.
2. To identify ICs' needs and socio-demographic characteristics.
3. To compare available support and ICs' actual needs.

The overall objective is to gain a better understanding of burden experienced by a discrete and specific population, and of problems experienced by both support programs and healthcare professionals.

Sampling and data collection

Semi-directive interviews with persons in charge of associations, peer-support groups, and other activities available to informal caregivers, will focus on the issues in relation with the very functioning of these structures/ programs/ activities, and facts and figures.

Five individual semi-directive interviews will be conducted for each group (four informal caregivers and one mental health professional), as well as one focus group per category of Serious Persistent Mental Illness (schizophrenia spectrum, affective disorders, anxiety disorders, other psychiatric disorders) and mental health professionals.

Research team

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