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Differences in the Level of Burden Put On Mothers and Fathers of Patients Suffering From Schizophrenia

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Background: Most studies on the consequences of psychiatric illnesses for caregiver relatives of patients involve only one relative, predominantly a parent and most often the patient's mother. Studies that focus on the gender-specific differences between caregiver relatives are very sparse. In order to rule out possible differences in the level of burden depending on the particular patient both parents of the same patients were included in this study.

Objectives: To analyse the differences in the level of burden put on mothers and fathers of patients diagnosed with schizophrenia according to ICD-10. To analyse the correlation between the unmet needs of caregivers and the level of burden put on them.

Methods: Both parents of 101 patients with schizophrenia were included in this study. The different aspects of caregivers' burden were assessed by means of the 'Involvement Evaluation Questionnaire'. Unmet needs of caregivers were assessed with the 'Carers' Needs Assessment for Schizophrenia'.

Results: Mothers showed significantly higher scores in the dimensions 'Tensions' and 'Urging' than fathers. Multiple linear regression analysis showed positive correlation between unmet needs and the level of burden in both mothers and fathers.

Conclusions: Unmet needs of caregiving parents of patients suffering from schizophrenia are in correlation with higher levels of burden. The differences between mothers and fathers in the level of burden indicate the importance of considering the caregiver's gender in clinical work.