TRAINING NEEDS THROUGH THE EYES OF THE CLOSE FRIENDS AND RELATIVES OF PEOPLE WITH MENTAL DISORDERS

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Abstract
The modern views and approaches in psychiatry pay special attention to families of patients with mental disorders. There is no doubt that the relatives are key players for the sick person and the main helpers in treatment. The Aim of this study is to describe and analyze the need of information and training to families of patients with mental disorders. Methods: An anonymous survey has been carried out of 165 relatives of people with mental disorders hospitalized in psychiatric hospitals in Sofia, Vratsa and Novi Iskar in January-February 2014.Results The majority of the families of patients with mental disorders like to receive more information on the problems associated with mental illnesses. Relatives of people with mental disorders claim their being ready to be trained in special organized training courses and seminars.

Key words: *patients, mental disorders, relatives, training*

1. INTRODUCTION

The modern views and approaches in psychiatry put a special focus on work with the close friends and relatives of individuals with mental disorders. Undoubtedly the close friends and relatives are the key figures for the sick and the main helpers for their treatment. In the psychiatric practice the close friends and relatives are those who may provide special assistance upon assessment of the patient's condition at any time. The close friends and relatives of individuals with mental disorders take upon themselves the burden to care for the sick and for that reason they need adequate help and support to get better understanding of the patient and render the care that the patient needs.

Surely in our modern society still reins the stigma toward individuals with mental disorders. Families also suffer from the stigmatizing attitude because of their relation with a person with a mental problem. The mental diagnosis sounds like a sentence in Bulgaria. In response the families often hide and conceal their problems as they feel ashamed and embarrassed. They do not speak frankly about the disease of their relative, they rarely seek help and support beyond the limits of their family; they suffer in silence and live in isolation. They often experience much pain, guilt, fear, anger, hopelessness. Wrapped up in the care for their relative, they ignore their own needs and just don't know how to care of themselves. They share that they need more attention and understanding. They very much appreciate the information provided to them by specialists if it is in accessible language.

The need of regular training of the close friends and relatives of people with mental disorders is undoubted. Getting appropriate information related to the disease results not only in optimization of care but also reduces the feeling of uncertainty and doom. The key tasks for the work with the close friends and relatives must be:

- The provision of basic concepts in the field of psychopathology concerning the disease and its aetiology, clinical picture, progress; methods of study and treatment; the basic rights of individuals with mental disorders; opportunities for psycho-social rehabilitation and reintegration of mental patients; regulatory documents governing the activity of psychiatric services.

- Formation and strengthening of the skills for detection and handling of the early symptoms of exacerbation of the disease; for using different levels of communication; for recognition and overcoming the resistance, aggression, self-oriented aggression, suicide attempts, isolation; for planning the everyday care and assessment of the achieved results; for relax; for work with different institutions.

Appropriate forms for work with the close friends and relatives may include elaboration of brochures, leaflets and other visual aids; conducting individual and group lectures, organization of training courses, etc.With regard to the above, we conducted our own survey on the needs of information and training through the eyes of the close friends and relatives of individuals with mental disorders.

2. PURPOSE

To describe and analyse the needs of information and training of the close friends and relatives of individuals with mental disorders

3. METHODS

Anonymous survey was conducted among 165 close friends and relatives of people with mental disorders hospitalized in psychiatric inpatient departments on the territory of Sofia, Vratsa and Novi Iskar. Among respondents prevail women and people at a mature age. The number of individuals with high and higher education is approximately identical.

gender		age				education		
Men	Women	18-44 years	45-59 years	60-74 years	Over 75 years	primary	high education	higher education
57	108	52	69	34	10	18	75	72

Table 1 Distribution of the close friends and relatives participating in the survey by gender, age and education

The survey was conducted from January to February 2014.The primary data from the survey have been collected and analysed by documentary, sociological and statistical methods. Anonymous questionnaire was developed for the needs of the survey. Processing of the material and the quantitative analysis was conducted through statistical package of applied software – SPSS 17.0. The products of Microsoft Office, including ExcelMicrosoft Office were used for graphic presentation of the results.

4. RESULTS

The analysis of results clearly demonstrates the opinion of the close friends and relatives of people with mental disorders about the need of information concerning the disease and the care for their relative. To the question: „Do you consider that you obtain sufficient information about the problems related with the disease of your relative?“, 45% of the respondents consider that they receive sufficient information, 28% are not sure and 26% consider that the information, which they receive, is insufficient.

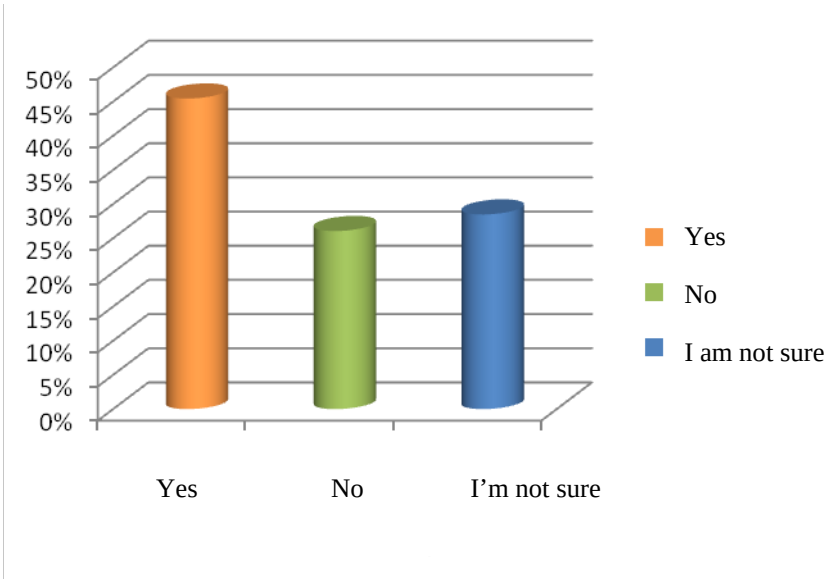

Fig. 1 Sufficiency of information

To the question whether they would like to receive more information, 71% of the respondents reply positively and only 12% negatively.

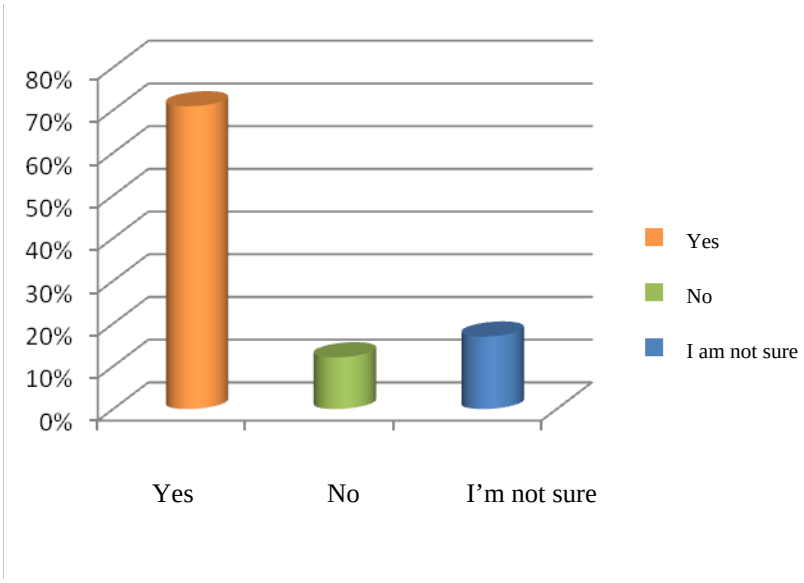

Fig. 2 Willingness of the close friends and relatives to obtain more information

To the question whether they would participate at a seminar or course of training, 58 % of the respondents say "yes", 25% are not sure at present and 18% consider that they would not take part in training courses.

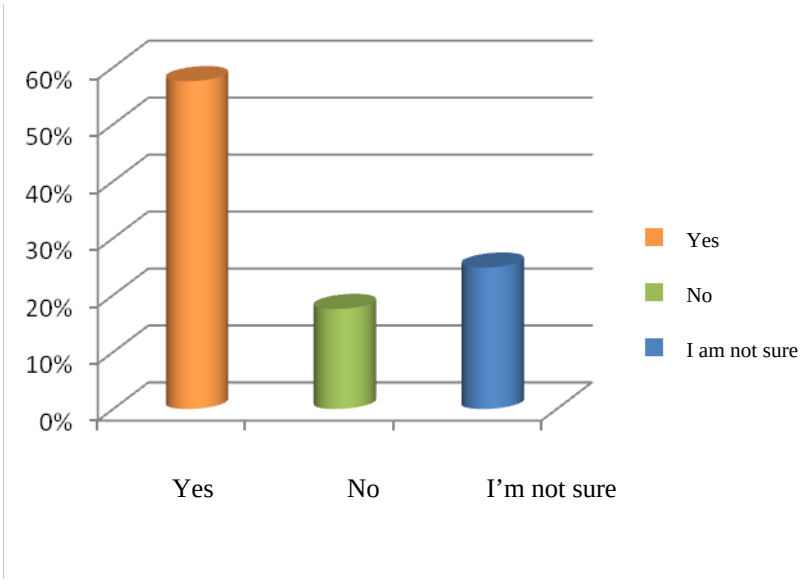

Fig. 3 Readiness of the close friends and relatives to attend training courses

We asked the close friends and relatives from where they obtain the required information. Considering that they were able to give more than one answer, the results look as follows: 61% of the respondents state that they receive the required information from their medical doctor, 18% receive information from other sick people and from their close friends and relatives, 17 % from different visual aids and 3% from training courses and seminars.

Sources	percent
From the medical doctor and nurse	61%
From other sick people and their close friends and relatives	17%
From brochures, leaflets and other visual aids	18%
From training courses and seminars	3%

Table 2 Sources of information for the close friends and relatives

5. CONCLUSIONS

The majority of close friends and relatives of people with mental disorders wish to obtain more information on problems related with mental diseases.

The close friends and relatives of people with mental disorders express their readiness to attend training courses and seminars organized for their needs.

Despite of the readiness of the close friends and relatives and the modern focus on the development and implementation of training programmes for the families of mental patients, only few of the close friends and relatives of people with mental disorders are covered by training courses and seminars.

We should consider the opinion of the close friends and relatives of people with mental disorders and take measures so that their training becomes an integral part to the treatment and diagnostic plan of these patients and a priority task for the society. Time has come to invest in development of brochures, leaflets and other visual aids; conducting individual and group lectures, organization of training courses, etc.

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