

S44-02

IMPLEMENTING FAMILY SUPPORTIVE INTERVENTIONS FOR SCHIZOPHRENIA IN PUBLIC MENTAL HEALTH CENTRES

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Studies aimed at implementing supportive treatments for families in clinical practice report that after a training course 7 to 27 percent of professionals apply these treatments in clinical work and a mean of 1.4 to 1.7 families per trainee receive these interventions.

We carried out a study in 23 Italian mental health centres in order to explore the feasibility of providing psychoeducational interventions for persons with schizophrenia and their families in routine conditions.

Two professionals from each center attended three monthly training sessions for psychoeducational interventions. After the training, each professional provided informative sessions on schizophrenia to five families of service users with schizophrenia, which consisted of three meetings with each family on clinical aspects of schizophrenia, drug treatments, and detection of early signs of relapse. Each professional then provided the intervention to families for six months.

Thirty-eight of the 46 participants completed the training course, and 34 provided the intervention to 71 families. Twenty-nine of the 34 provided the entire intervention to the families and five of the 34 held only informative sessions on schizophrenia. Ninety-one percent of the participants who completed the study reported difficulties in integrating the intervention with their work responsibilities, and 96 percent acknowledged the positive effect that the intervention had on the center's relationship with patients with schizophrenia and their families.

These results support the idea that it is possible to introduce psychoeducational interventions in mental health centres after a relatively brief period of training and supervision.