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THE EFFECT OF FAMILY PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL INTERVENTIONS ON PATIENTS WITH DEPRESSION

A. Fiorillo, C. Malangone, V. Del Vecchio, C. De Rosa, M. Luciano, D. Giacco, G. Sampogna, L. Del Gaudio, M. Maj

Department of Psychiatry, University of Naples SUN, Naples, Italy

While the efficacy of family psychoeducational interventions in the treatment of schizophrenia is now well documented, few data are available on its efficacy in major depression. This study aimed to verify the effectiveness of a family psychoeducational intervention according to the Falloon model on patients' clinical status, social functioning and lifestyle and on relatives' burden and social network.

The study was coordinated by the Department of Psychiatry of the University of Naples SUN and carried out in 7 Italian mental health centres. In each centre, 8 patients with major depression and their relatives were recruited if they fulfilled the following criteria: a) diagnosis of unipolar major depression according to the DSM-IV; b) aged between 18 and 65 years; c) in charge to the local mental health centre for at least 6 months; d) at least one depressive episode in the last two years; e) living with at least one relative aged between 18 and 70 years.

Recruited families have been randomly allocated to the experimental group, which received the psychoducational intervention for 6 months, or to the control group, which received the treatment as usual plus an informative brief intervention.

22 families have been treated with the experimental intervention and 22 with the control one. At the end of the intervention, patients' clinical status and life-style significantly improved in the treated group, as well as family objective burden and social contacts.

Family psychoeducational intervention are useful in reducing personal and family difficulties caused by depression and in improving patients' lifestyles.