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NEEDS OF FATHERS AND MOTHERS OF SCHIZOPHRENIA PATIENTS

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Introduction: Most studies investigating the problems and needs of schizophrenia patients' carers include only one care-giving relative - mostly the patients' mothers.

Purpose: The compare needs of mothers and fathers of patients with schizophrenia.

Methods: 101 sets of parents of patients suffering from schizophrenia were included in this study. They were assessed by means of the "Carers' Needs Assessment for Schizophrenia".

Results: Compared to fathers, mothers reported significantly more often problems concerning stress due to earlier life events and burn-out. Mothers required some interventions such as individual psychoeducation or family counselling more than twice as often than fathers. Overall, mothers reported more problems and needs than fathers. The number of mothers' problems was predicted by not living with a partner and a shorter duration of the patients' illness (DUPI). The number of mothers' needs was predicted by patients' psychiatric symptoms, not living with a partner and a shorter DUPI. Among fathers we could not identify any predictors, neither for problems nor for needs.

Conclusions: Parents of schizophrenic patients have various problems handling their child's illness and therefore need professional support. Overall, mothers reported more problems and needs for interventions than fathers. The differences between mothers' and fathers' problems and needs indicate the importance of considering the carer's gender in clinical work.