

Practice: Children and Families Caring for Children with HIV-AIDS

Title: Report on the Psychoeducational Group at the Pediatric Special Clinic in Trinidad

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Target Audience: Caregivers, Health Care Providers, Parents, Psychologists

Key Transferable

- Lessons:**
- (1) HIV-AIDS requires a multi-disciplinary approach; it is not only a medical issue
 - (2) HIV-AIDS has many psychosocial implications and failure to address the needs of PLWHA in a holistic way can negatively impact on prevention and treatment and contribute to poor outcomes
 - (3) Psychosocial issues affect Persons Living With HIV-AIDS (PLWHA) and also family members and caregivers
 - (4) Psychoeducational sessions, lectures and activities can provide support for parents and caregivers
 - (5) Psychoeducational issues include fears with respect to HIV-AIDS, psychological consequences of HIV-AIDS including anger and depression, stigma and discrimination and social support

Also see Power point Presentation: [Sondai-The New Experiences](#)

**REPORT
ON
THE PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL GROUP
CONDUCTED AT
THE PEDIATRIC SPECIAL CLINIC
IN TRINIDAD**

This document represents a summary of the psychosocial needs of caregivers of HIV positive children who attended psychoeducational group activities at the Pediatric Special Clinic in Trinidad. This group, hereafter referred to as the psychoeducational group, was formed to address the needs of parents and care-givers facing the challenges of coping with HIV/AIDS in the areas of self-care and child-care.

INTRODUCTION

HIV/AIDS is not solely a medical issue but also has serious psychosocial implications. A positive HIV diagnosis greatly impacts the intrapersonal, interpersonal and environmental domains of individuals' lives. Thus, in the health care setting any attempt to provide care and treatment should involve a multidisciplinary team approach to addressing the medical, emotional, and social needs of this client group. As HIV positive persons present to the hospital, they bring their life experiences of living with the virus, therefore careful consideration should be given to clients' coping abilities, i.e. adopt a strengths-based approach.

For parents and caregivers at the Pediatric Special Clinic one of the major challenges was coping with illnesses that arise as a consequence of HIV. This clinic provides care and treatment for HIV infected and exposed children, however in the pursuit of providing medical care for these children the larger family issues need to be addressed

since they impact on the child's well being. Some of the issues experienced by the parents and caregivers include:

- Multiple-grief
- Unresolved issues of blame and anger
- Inadequate financial and material support
- Lack of social support
- Stigma and discrimination
- Caregivers themselves HIV positive caring for children who are HIV positive

Hence, the critical role of the social worker in the provision of psychosocial intervention.

Research has shown that one of the effective treatment modalities for HIV positive persons is group therapy.

THE PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL GROUP

A psychoeducational group has a psychological theme of focus and an educational function. It includes planned sessions, activities and mini lectures. It focuses on educating members as well as on providing emotional support. Members benefit from the mutual support, the reduction in social isolation and the receiving of information.

The advantages of this type of intervention are as follows:

- Cost Effective
- Time Effective
- Reaching more parents/caregivers

Structure

This was an open group to facilitate the parents and caregivers attending the clinic. It involved four two-hour sessions. This group was designed to complement the clinic activities, therefore the sessions were planned when most of the medical procedures were completed.

Purpose

To provide information on self -care and child- care in the domains of the emotional, social, physical and intellectual, in an attempt to strengthen coping skills. Also, to create a “safe space” for members to share emotional issues and receive support.

Membership

Parents and caregivers of children (2yrs – 12yrs) attending the Pediatric Special Clinic. Membership of twelve to fifteen individuals.

Recruitment

Potential members from the clinic were informed and given invitation cards to attend the group sessions.

Self Care

Refreshments were provided and care for children while parents were in session was also provided

Sponsorship

The National AIDS Coordinating Committee (NACC) sponsored the meals.

Content

The content of this group was developed based on needs identified in discussion with health professional, Social Workers and parents

SESSION ONE

Eleven members attended this session (eight mothers, two fathers and one sister). While, a Patient Care Assistant supervised their five children in a private area - the children were entertained with games and movies.*

Mini Lecture: Nutrition and its importance to living with HIV-AIDS

Guided Discussion: This discussion involved issues relating to intimate and family relationships, social relationships before and after diagnosis, recreation, rest and social support. Members were quite reserved during the initial stages of the session. However, when focused was placed on relationships, members began sharing their negative experiences with significant others because of their HIV sero-positive status. The following represents key issues that emerged from the session:

- Fears concerning disclosure
- Unresolved anger and blame
- Depression
- A forum to ventilate
- Child's ill health and hospitalization

Condom Demonstration: Information concerning condom use and demonstrations of the correct method of putting on a condom were done.

SESSION TWO

Twelve members attended this meeting (six mothers, two fathers, two grandmothers, one grandfather and one sister), while the Patient Care Assistant supervised their eight children.

Review: A recap on the previous session was done and reminders of ground rules were reiterated.

* Important to note that societies with advanced levels of HIV-AIDS infections will have increased numbers of child-headed households

Mini Lecture: Information on the types of food groups and their purposes were presented.

Guided Discussion: Presentations regarding information relating to the stages of grief were highlighted and coping strategies discussed. Members were open and very expressive during this session; there were also occasions when members became tearful. The main issues that arose were:

- Lack of family support
- Inadequate government support (financial and material)
- Stigma and discrimination
- Emotional trauma

Condom Demonstration: Condom demonstration using both male and female condoms were done.

SESSION THREE

Fifteen members attended the session (nine mothers, three fathers, one grandmother, one sister, one caregiver), while the Patient Care Assistant supervised their eight children.

Review A recap on the previous session was done and reminders of ground rules were reiterated.

Guided Discussion: The discussion involved caring for the internal and external aspects of the physical self – diet, personal hygiene and grooming. This was a very interactive session, since members were provided with a forum to discuss specific issues surrounding treatment. Major themes coming out of the session included:

- Caring for physical self
- Adhering to treatment
- Side effects

- Availability of medication

SESSION FOUR

Fourteen members attended this meeting (eight mothers, two fathers, one grandmother, one grandfather, one uncle, one sister), while the Patient Care Assistant supervised their six children.

Review: A recap on the previous session was done and reminders of ground rules were reiterated.

Guided Discussion: This discussion involved issues regarding academic and skills development, school attendance and performance, delayed mental development in the children and HIV/AIDS in the work place. Parents/caregivers were given strategies to assist children academically, and they were encouraged to seek employment. Members were also given information with regards to accessing material and financial resources in the community. Key issues were:

- Academic support for children
- Employment
- Skills development
- Stigma and discrimination in the work place

This meeting signaled termination, and it was a highly emotional one. Members were tearful and articulated their disappointment with the following comments:

- “What will we do now?”
- “Who will I talk to now? You’ll like family”
- “Why we can’t continue the group?”
- “You’ll create a monster, what we go do now?”

These comments were evident of the positive impact of the group sessions. Clearly, members' needs were met and the group had achieved its goal. In an effort to address the members expressed need for continuation, the postgraduate student held meetings with the Consultant Pediatric Clinic and Manager Social Services Department to acquire a commitment for the continuation of the group - this was given.

EVALUATION

At the end of each session feedback was obtained through the use of a questionnaire (see appendix i). This questionnaire was designed to evaluate the following:

- The method of communication
- The topics
- The needs and interests in a support group

The Method of Communication

Each session was well received and most of the members understood the information presented. The facilitators, who were all qualified social workers used their skills and knowledge in groupwork, to deliver the information. They used an interactive approach that allowed for discussion, sharing of experiences and challenges, and the arriving at solutions. This technique was useful since it drew from the Strengths Perspective where members' resiliency factors were identified and supported, this positively impacted members coping skills.

The Topics

All the topics addressed the psychosocial needs of members, since the discussions involved issues relating to the intrapersonal, interpersonal and environmental factors. Members were provided with an opportunity to ventilate and confront unresolved issues of anger and guilt. Most members believed that the information was useful and it met

their needs – an indication that the information imparted was relevant, and the recommended strategies were simple and practical.

Needs and Interests

Questions seven and eight on the questionnaire addressed the issue of the members' needs and interests in a support group. In every session most of the members responded positively to a support group and their desire to participate in one. The feedback from the questionnaire is indicative of the success of the psychoeducational group. Clearly, this is a powerful form of intervention for parents/caregivers of children who are diagnosed HIV positive. The data from the evaluation informed the recommendation for the continuation of the psychoeducational group.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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(Appendix i)

EVALUATION FORM
PARENT PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL GROUP

Please circle one answer to each question

1. How much of the information did you understand?

All of the information

Some of the information

None of the information

2. Did the session meet your needs or address your issues?

Yes

No

Don't know

3. Was the information useful/helpful?

Yes

No

Don't know

4. What did you learn that was new?

5. What other topics should be included for discussion?

6. How would you rate this session?

Excellent

Good

Satisfactory

Poor

7. Do you think there is a need for a parent support group?

Yes

No

Don't know

8. Would you be interested in joining a parent support group?

Yes

No

Don't know

(Appendix ii)

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

** Inconclusive – unable to understand response*

<i>Ques.</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>Session 1</i>	<i>Session 2</i>	<i>Session 3</i>	<i>Session 4</i>
1	All info	7	9	10	8
	Some info	3	2	0	2
	None info	0	0	0	0
	No resp.	1	0	0	1
2	Yes	10	10	8	10
	No	1	1	1	0
	Don't know	0	0	0	1
	No resp.	0	0	1	0
3	Yes	9	11	10	11
	No	0	0	0	0
	Don't know	0	0	0	0
	Inconclusive	2	0	0	0
4	Nothing	2	0	0	0
	No resp.	6	5	4	4
	Inconclusive	2	2	1	0
	Comments	other members challenges	stages of grief support for PLWHA journaling financial res.	adhering to meds. administering meds. living positive dangers of non adherence challenges of HIV+ children	self care HIV testing Re. US residence managing HIV/AIDS social supp. all the info caring for PLWHA managing HIV/AIDS
5	No response	4	5	6	5
	Inconclusive	1	1	0	0
	Comments	material& fin. support fathering an HIV+ child	relationship with HIV-children medication	rights dental clinic adhering to meds.	stigma & discrimination happiness HIV+ children

		social support drugs family life intimate relationship	HIV/AIDS and the workplace Informal supp. family life financial assist. parenting	financial issues social work couples & HIV/AIDS	& immunization. Relationships Financial asst. HIV/AIDS info dissemination
6	Excellent Good Satisfactory Poor	6 3 2 0	7 4 0 0	5 3 2 0	8 2 1 0
7	Yes No Don't know	11 0 0	11 0 0	10 0 0	11 0 0
8	Yes No Don't know	11 0 0	10 0 1	8 1 1	11 0 0