Abstract

Objective: This study examined the helpfulness of coping strategies and the relative importance of mental health services in coping with schizophrenia from the perspective of siblings. Methods: This article presents selected survey data from a national study of 746 respondents that investigated the impact of schizophrenia on siblings' lives. The authors developed the Friedrich-Lively Instrument to Assess the Impact of Schizophrenia on Siblings (FLIISS), a closed-ended questionnaire that included questions about coping strategies and mental health services. Results: Respondents identified services for the ill sibling, including symptom control, adequate housing, and long-term planning, as more important than direct services for themselves. The top-ranked coping strategies were education about schizophrenia, a supportive family, and seeing the ill sibling suffer less because symptoms were controlled. Understanding that families were not to blame for schizophrenia was the most helpful coping strategy for nearly three-fourths of siblings. Siblings had little contact with providers in the past; yet the majority of siblings wanted providers to be available to answer questions and clarify their role in future care. At the time of the study, respondents provided social support and helped with crises, but few coordinated the total care. Conclusions: Siblings identified multiple ways that providers can support and assist them in coping with the impact of schizophrenia. Education and support for siblings without schizophrenia and services for their ill siblings will become increasingly important for the well-being of siblings as they are faced with the responsibility of being the primary caregivers in the future. (Psychiatric Services 59:261—267, 2008)