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May Aasebø Hauken

University of Bergen, Norway

Optimizing social network support for families living with parental cancer: Results from a RCT study

Background: Social support is important for health and quality of life (QOL). However, families living with parental cancer report severe lack of social support and little is known about the social networks of these families.

Aim: Thus, the aim of this study was to optimize social network support via a 3 hour structured network meeting for families living with parental cancer and their social network members.

Methods: A RCT study where 35 families living with parental cancer were randomized to either a control group or an intervention group. Data on QOL, social support and mental health were obtained from healthy parents and children via validated questionnaires.

Results: Both healthy parents and the children reported more mental distress and impaired quality of life than the norm population before the intervention. For healthy parents a significant intervention effect ($p=.03$) was found with main effects on received and perceived social support, suggesting an indirect effect on QOL through social support. A significant impact was also seen on parental self-efficacy ($p=.021$). The intervention stabilized the children's family function, while the family function largely ($d = 0.86$) decreased in the control group ($p=.018$). Significant correlations were documented between the children's levels of anxiety and the well parents' received social support ($r= -.196$; $p<.001$), QOL ($r= -.138$; $p<.05$) and psychological distress ($r= .166$; $p<.05$).

Conclusions: Optimizing social network support for families living with parental cancer via a short network meeting seems to increase provided social support for the families with positive impact on both healthy parents and the children's situation.

Biography

May Aasebø Hauken is an Associate Professor at Centre for Crisis Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, University of Bergen, Norway.

may.hauken@uib.no

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