Everyday stress and coping in families where child suffers with Type 1 diabetes

Anastasia Krasko, Nadezhda F. Mikhailova - Faculty of Psychology, St.Petersburg State University, 7/9 Universitetskaya nab., St. Petersburg, 199034 Russia.

Sample:

48 respondents

27 parents

- 24 to 53 years
- 1-3 children
- worsening of the child's illness was reported in 52% of cases
- children of 59% of the group used an injection method of insulin therapy, and 41% - insulin pump
- 21 adolescents with type 1 diabetes
- 11 to 20 years
- 62% females and 38% males
- experiences diabetes from 1 to 20 years
- worsening of the child's illness was reported in 62% of cases
- 48% used an injection method, and in 11 (52%) - insulin pump

Methods:

- Biographical questionnaire
- Our modification of questionnaire on everyday stress (included specific stressors experienced by patients and their parents in connection with diabetes)
- Scale of Perceived Stress - 10
- Questionnaire "Parent-Child Interaction" by Markovskaya I.M.
- Ways of Coping Questionnaire –WCQ
- Questionnaire FACES-III
- Methods of diagnosing the attitude of parents to the child's illness
- Personality questionnaires: Five-factor personal questionnaire (for parents) and Trier Personal Questionnaire – TRF (for adolescents)

Analysis:

- For designing the questionnaires, the Cronbach's Alpha was calculated (The questionnaire of everyday stress for parents included 66 micro stressors in spheres of interfamily, intrapersonal, social stress, and specific stress, associated with a disease with value of Cronbach's Alpha of 0,899, and the questionnaire for adolescents – 48 questions in same spheres with value of Cronbach's Alpha of 0,880).
- Frequency analysis was performed to identify the most common daily stressors.
- The sample was divided into groups depending on depending on the age, gender, duration of the disease, compensation, complications, way of therapy and compliance: dieting, sports, keeping a blood glucose diary, which is also one of the factors of successful diabetes compensation, and the groups were compared in pairs using Mann - Whitney U tests.
- Multiple regression analysis was done for identifying predictors of stress and family functioning in families with child suffering from type 1 diabetes

The most common stressors of everyday life

For parents:

- child's current illness (other illnesses, not diabetes) (0,29),
- conflicts with the child (0,27),
- worries about current/future social situation of family members (0,26),
- worries about their own social situation (0,25),
- necessity to spend a lot of time at work (0,25).

For adolescents:

- conflicts with parents (0,49),
- studying overload (0,45),
- their illness (diabetes) (0,43),
- worries about their own future (0,43)
- criticism of them (0,4)

Discussion and conclusions:

The main stressors of everyday life in families with a child suffering from type 1 diabetes were identified. For both parents and children the greatest stress load was intrafamily stress, and the least – stress, associated with illness. Nevertheless, it has great importance and influenced the whole family system.

For modification we used questionnaires of everyday stress and coping for parents and adolescents by M. Perrez. The questionnaire can be used as a practical tool for identifying risk groups among parents of children with type 1 diabetes and adolescents with type 1 diabetes, who need psychological support both related to the disease and to other spheres of life. However, for high-quality standardization of questionnaires a large sample is required. It could be one of the directions for further work.

We found significant differences in everyday stressors, level of perceived stress, coping behavior, characteristics of personality and family functioning, parenting styles, parents' attitude to the child's illness, depending on the various characteristics associated with the disease, which suggests that not only presence of illness, but also differences in the control and progression of the disease also affect the lives of parents and adolescents with type 1 diabetes. Despite the outstanding advances in the treatment and prevention of complications over the past few decades, the diabetes continues to be a highly disabling, stigmatizing disease that affects perceived stress of entire family system, for example such indicators as family cohesion and family adaptation. In addition to the stressors, experienced by adolescents themselves, their perceived stress and family functioning was also affected by the parents' stressors, associated with diabetes of their child. Thus, parental stressors were predictors of family cohesion and adaptation, assessed by adolescents.

Stressors, experienced by adolescents due to diabetes, influenced parents' assessments of family cohesion and adaptation, parenting style and attitude to the child's illness.

This suggests family stress, associated with diabetes, as a possible moderator of satisfaction with family cohesion and adaptation, which are traditionally considered in various studies as family coping resources. It was also confirmed in our study.