

Stress, anxiety and depression in parents of children with chronic kidney disease

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Objectives

The quality of life in children with chronic kidney disease (CKD) is impaired. However, little is known about the impact on the family of having a child with CKD. The aim of this study was to explore the psychological wellbeing in this parent group with special emphasis on socio-demographic variables, parental stress, anxiety and depression.

Methods

Thirty-six parents (27 mothers) of children with CKD completed questionnaires regarding their own psychological wellbeing and socio-demographic situation. Parental stress was evaluated by the Parenting Stress Index - Short Form (PSI-SF) and the Pediatric Inventory for Parents (PIP). Symptoms of anxiety and depression were measured using the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS).

Results

The socio-demographic questionnaire revealed that half of the parents (18/36) perceives a deterioration of their own health since the CKD diagnosis of their child. In 17/36 families, at least one of the parents reduced work activities due to the CKD diagnosis. Regarding general parental stress (PSI-SF), parents generated scores within the normal range (59 ± 23 ; normal range 43 – 61). The disease related parental stress measurement (PIP) showed the highest stress level on the domain 'emotional distress' (42 ± 13) and equal stress levels on the 3 other domains 'communication' (22 ± 6), 'medical care' (22 ± 8), and 'role function' (22 ± 8). Parents report mild symptoms of anxiety (8 ± 4) but normal symptoms of depression (5 ± 4). Exploring the relation between all measurements of parenting stress, anxiety and depression, overall significant correlations could be found (correlation coefficients between $r=0.51$ and $r=0.69$; $p < 0.01$).

Conclusions

CKD in children does not only affect the child itself. Parents of CKD patients report more health problems since the diagnosis of their child, and a suggestive presence of anxiety problems can be seen. Normal but rather high mean levels of parental stress can be found. As the impact of CKD goes beyond the child and affects the entire family, a multidisciplinary family-based therapy is recommended.