

Title of Paper: The involvement of the social worker within the interdisciplinary nephrology team.

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Purpose:

To highlight the importance of the social worker's role (SW) in an interdisciplinary team of a tertiary care nephrology clinic, specifically with regards to tailoring services to meet the individual needs of the families.

Living with a child with a chronic renal failure requires significant adaptations on the part of all family members. The child's medical condition can destabilize the family dynamic, thereby causing dysfunction within the family unit, impacting all members in a significant way (model of Barlow & Ellard, 2004).

By counselling and providing support to family, the SW helps the family adapt to the illness, ultimately leading to a sense of empowerment regarding the child's condition.

We hypothesized that this organisational model could be transferred to other settings.

Method:

The interdisciplinary team redefined the role of the SW as well the possible areas of intervention with each patient and family. The main reasons for consulting the SW in our clinic (around 3000 visits/year) were identified:

- *Adaptation to the illness;
- *Organization around the illness;
- *implementation of the treatment plan;
- *Financial support.

Results:

We have established that the SW's involvement with the families of children with a chronic renal failure brings significant positive changes:

- *improved compliance to the treatment plan;
- *improved implementation of the treatment plan (i.e. good observance to medication, financial support for transportation and medical equipment);
- *improved family adaptation to the child's health condition;
- *Global empowerment of the family

Conclusion:

Each member of the interdisciplinary team has their own area of expertise and contributes to the treatment of the patient and the family. The SW plays a role in the global bio-psycho-social approach to a child's health condition. The cost-benefit of the SW involvement is positive.

This organizational framework can be adapted to any specialized clinic.

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