

The impact of the disease on functioning of a family with an autistic child

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Introduction: Scientific communities are beginning to recognize more and more tension, burden and sometimes joy associated with caring for child with autism.

Purpose: To determine the impact of the disease on functioning of a family with an autistic child.

Material and Methods: We analyzed 83 families with children diagnosed with autistic disease, including 30 Polish families, 25 families from Belarus and 28 families from France. Parents filled in a questionnaire assessing their knowledge about problems associated with raising an autistic child.

Results: Parents from Poland found most difficult to accept the child's health condition, and families from France coped with the problem best. For all parents the dominant impression after hearing the diagnosis was shock, French parents were the least likely to associate the disease as a punishment for their sins, which in turn often occurred among respondents from Poland and Belarus. Parents from Belarus frequently complained about problems their autistic child had with learning (about ¾ of responses). While Polish parents surprisingly often

recognized as the most onerous carrying out procedures related to the treatment of the child, they often complained about depression, sadness, insomnia. Respondents from Belarus most frequently could enjoy every day. Among the behaviours of autistic children differentiating the examined countries were: disobedience (by far the least indications in France), persistence (the lowest percentage in Belarus) and lies (parents from Poland most often complained about that). Among the parents' reaction to the annoying and stressful child's behaviour the attempts to admonish and explain were dominant, but these were parents from Poland, who frequently admitted that they shout at the child.

Conclusions: Among parents' reaction to the annoying and stressful child's behavior is an attempt to admonish and explain, moreover, Polish parents frequently admit to shout at the child. There are differences in the perception of the problems of parents of autistic children in selected countries, like Poland, France, and Belarus.

Key words: Family, disease, disorder, autistic
