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## **12 – Association Between Family Functioning Style and Health Problems in Primary Care.**

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### **Introduction**

Prevention and control of chronic health diseases are major health challenges in primary care. These diseases causes disability, death and high-cost in worldwide health care institutions. Success depends on primary care that is focused on the intervention of the disease management through a transdisciplinary approach.

It is well known that family dynamics have a great influence on the clinical outcomes for patients. Primary care should be aware of the association between family functioning style and health problems. Most of the repercussion of this association has been studied in psychology, the results of these studies determined that families with better lifestyle behaviours' appear to have healthier families. (2)

### **Family**

A considered number of family factors have been consistently found to be related to health condition. These factors include family cohesion and support, conflict, sibling relationships, parenting style and discipline methods, and parental mental health. The quality of family functioning is an important environmental factor influencing health well-being. Furthermore, environmental factors in the home such as parenting style, family routines and activities, family mood, family behaviour, and health promotion practices, including racial and ethnic differences in lifestyles and perspectives within and among families have been shown to influence behaviour and impact health outcomes. Sick people who live in families that get along well together report higher levels of overall well-being than those living in families that do not.(3)

The relationship between family and health has been investigated in new areas from mental illness to chronic disease, obesity, and chronic disabilities.

However, there is not enough research being done on this topic and its methodology was questionable by cause of inconclusive results and low rates of external validation.

Since family functioning has emerged as an important subject to study, psychometric tools are necessary to measure and yield results to help the perspective to assess families. Studies revealed that Family Functioning Style Scale is a psychometrically appropriate instrument to evaluate strengths and capabilities of the families. The Family Functioning Style Scale (FFSS) can be used to examine the way families use their strengths, capabilities, and competencies to activate their internal and external resources and meet their needs in times of crises and stress. With the help of FFSS,

primary care practitioners will identify sources of resilience within the family but also areas of family functioning that need to be strengthened or addressed. (1)

### **Family APGAR**

Family APGAR is another scale that evaluates aspects of family functioning. APGAR has been widely used to study the relationship of family and problems in family practice offices, this scale should be used as a quick assessments tool for family functionality.

From another point of view, we must encourage greater importance in the implementation of health and social programs that promote family involvement in the control and prevention of health problems. The need of more research in this setting will help to understand better the strong association between family functioning and health problems, with the objective to assess the impact on clinical care. Efforts by health professionals and policy makers to address parental health and family functioning may contribute creating family support programs. These programs should identify vulnerable or disadvantaged families, to improve their functioning and future development. As well, programs implementation will help families to manage the process and impact of their family functional style in the best interest to improve their health conditions.

According to the Centre for the Study of Social Policy held in the USA, public policies influence a number of health determinants that can help low- to moderate-income families overcome a range of financial, structural (or systemic), and personal barriers to:

1. Receiving timely, appropriate, and coordinated diagnostic, preventive, and treatment services;
2. Engaging in lifestyles that enhance their physical and mental well-being; and
3. Living in health-supporting environments.

These principles ought to apply collectively because they focus on basic and universal aspects related to family and health improvement. Policies within the Primary Care specialties must co-align with the public health sector, two fields with a common interest yet functioning independently for the last years and this is a complaint heard all over the world.

### **Summary**

In summary, the health of individuals and families is determined by several factors, while each of these factors may be considered separately, they often overlap, and no one factor is sufficient for ensuring a healthy life. <sup>(5)</sup> Dysfunctional families face special challenges when it comes to health—whether trying to maintain or improve their overall physical and mental well-being, preventing future illnesses, recovering from illnesses, or living with disabilities or terminal illnesses. <sup>(6)</sup>

For a long time, it has been believed that good health is crucial to a family's capacity to provide, nurture, and care for its members, although this focus, equally important is the importance of a high-quality family functionality in creating a superior and dynamic living environment, a prerequisite for development. In closing, we would like to underscore that we should never forget that family health matters.

## Take Home Message

- Primary care practitioners should be aware of the association between family functionality and health problems.
- The main family factors associated with health condition are: cohesion and support, conflict, sibling relationships, parenting style and discipline methods, and parental mental health.
- The Family Functioning Style Scale (FFSS) tells us about the way families reacts and activate their internal and external resources and meet their needs in times of crises and stress; helping us to identify sources of resilience within the family and the areas that need to be strengthened or addressed.
- Public policies influence a number of health determinants that can help low- to moderate-income families overcome a range of financial, structural (or systemic), and personal barriers to: Receiving timely, appropriate, and coordinated diagnostic, preventive, and treatment services; Engaging in lifestyles that enhance their physical and mental well-being; and living in health-supporting environments.
- The implementation of programs that promote family involvement in the control and prevention of health problems; and identify vulnerable or disadvantaged families, will improve their functioning and future development thus improving health conditions.

## Original Abstract

<http://www.woncaeurope.org/content/op-060-association-between-family-functioning-style-and-health-problems-primary-care>

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