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PARENTING STRESS IN CHILDHOOD LEUKAEMIA

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Background:

The experience of having a child with acute leukaemia can be one of the most heartfelt severe stressors that parents could possibly endure. Parents must cope with their child and their own emotional reactions from the time of diagnosis until completion of treatment. The objectives of this study are to determine the level of parenting stress, the risk factors contributing to high parenting stress, and the coping mechanisms used to handle the stress.

Materials & Methods:

This single centred, cross-sectional study was done amongst 117 parents at the Paediatric Haematology and Oncology Unit, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Medical Centre (UKMMC) over two years duration. Self-administered questionnaires comprising the Parenting Stress Index/Short Form (PSI/SF) and Coping Inventory for Stressful Situation (CISS) were distributed to parents of children who were 12 years old and below.

Results:

The mean total parenting stress score amongst parents of children diagnosed with acute leukaemia was 91.5. Only 27.3% of parents experienced a high total parenting stress score (total PSI score $\geq 75^{\text{th}}$ centile). Task-oriented coping mechanism was used by the majority of parents. Emotion-oriented coping mechanism was the only identifiable risk factor for high parenting stress score following multiple logistic regression analysis. A parent who uses emotion-oriented coping mechanism was 7.1 times (95% Confidence Interval 1.2 to 41.4) more likely to have a high parenting stress score compared to a parent who uses other coping mechanisms.

Conclusion:

By identifying these at risk parents, counselling and psychological support may be offered early to alleviate the stress as well as assist in the coping and adjustment mechanisms of these parents.

Keywords:

parenting stress; childhood leukaemia