

# Understanding the Families' Needs: Interventions for Family Members of Adolescents with Disruptive Behavior Disorders

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# Disclosure Statement

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- I have no conflicts of interest to disclose



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# Significance of the Problem

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- 10% of adolescents are affected by Disruptive Behavior Disorders or DBD
- Tragic and costly consequences to family members (e.g., parents/caregivers, siblings, other significant family members)
- Challenges and needs of family members receive no attention  
(Academies, 2009; Kilmer et al., 2010; Merikangas, 2010; Oruche et al., 2012)



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# Purpose of Study

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To describe:

1. The challenges experienced by family members of adolescents with Disruptive Behavior Disorders
2. The family members' perceived needs for support (i.e. intervention) from mental health professionals

# Methods

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- Conceptual Framework: Double ABCX Model of Family Stress and Adaptation
- Design: Mixed-methods descriptive study
  - Semi-structured interviews
  - Self-report questionnaires(McCubbin & Patterson, 1983)



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# Sample

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## Family Inclusion Criteria:

- An adolescent (13 to 18 years old) receiving care for DBD
- A parent or guardian (biological, adoptive, or step-parents)
- Siblings or other children (7 to 18 years old)
- Other adult family members who help to care for the adolescent with the DBD



# Data Analyses

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- Descriptive statistics
- Standard content analytic procedures





# Description of the Participants

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- 15 adolescents with DBD: ~15 years; 10 males, 5 females
- 15 parents or primary caregivers: ~45 years; 1 male, 14 females
- 12 siblings: ~14 years; 8 males and 4 females
- 10 other adult family members: ~37 years; 4 males, 6 females

Reported mild anxiety and depression, high stress levels, and problematic family functioning

# Result: Major Challenges

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- Being challenged by the adolescents' disruptive behaviors
- Being challenged by interactions with child service agencies



# Being Challenged by Adolescents' Disruptive Behavior Disorder

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- Managing aggressive behaviors
- Dealing with defiant behaviors
- Being vigilant due to deceitful behaviors



disruption

# Managing Aggressive Behaviors



“I’m afraid. I mean he’s getting bigger all the time and I’m scared of what he’s going to do next. If he can pick up a brick and throw it through my window, who’s to say he’s not going to pick up something and hit me with it and kill me or hurt his little brother badly.”

# Being Challenged By Interactions with Child Service Agencies

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- Criminal justice system
- Mental health system
- Child protection system
- School system



# Dealing with Mental Health System



“I know I need someone that I can talk to, someone that can help me understand what their [adolescents] issues are so that I can feel better about myself. Because not understanding what their issues are makes me upset, cry, and have anger issues myself.”

# “Perceived Needs”

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- Intervention modalities
  - Multi-family groups
  - Family therapy
  - Individual therapy
  - 24-hour crisis hotline



# Issues To Be Addressed

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- Etiology, treatment, and management of Disruptive Behavior Disorders
- Ways to improve family functioning
- Strategies for improving interactions with child service systems
- Ways to decrease levels of stress
- Success stories



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# Summary of Findings

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- Family members
  - experience profound challenges
  - report high levels of stress, depression, anxiety, and poor family functioning
  - Need intervention that focuses directly on the challenges experienced by all family members

# What Can Nurses Do?

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- Assess challenges and needs of all family members
- Educate about
  - etiology, treatment, and management of DBD
  - ways to improve family functioning
  - strategies to improve interactions with child service systems

(Oruche et al, in press)

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