

Nursing and Allied Health Abstracts

Title: THE IMPACT OF SPINA BIFIDA AND OTHER CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS (CHC) ON FAMILIES

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Background: Families of a child with a chronic health condition such as spina bifida are at an increased risk for economic, social and emotional challenges due to their child's condition. Little is known about the variables associated with these challenges. The purpose of this preliminary descriptive analysis is to determine the relationship of age and gender of the child, type of CHC (spina bifida, rheumatologic, epilepsy and asthma), and family conflict with the perceived economic, social, and emotional impact of a CHC on the families participating in a coping skills training clinical trial.

Method: Baseline data were collected from the first 33 families with school-aged children 8 to 12 years of age. Survey data were collected in face-to face interviews before random assignment to the study group. The economic, social and emotional challenges of dealing with a CHC were measured by parent report on Stein's "Impact on the Family Survey". Family conflict was measured by the conflict subscale of Moos's "Family Environment Scale". Age, gender and type of CHC were recorded at baseline. Descriptive statistics, correlations and ANOVA with post hoc Tukey's comparison were used to analyze study data ($p=.05$ for significance).

Results: Age $M=10.9$ ($SD 1.2$), 67% were female, and both family conflict and impact scores were in the moderate range. There were no relationships of age or family conflict with the total impact on family score. However a higher impact on families was reported by parents of boys ($r_s, =-.37$). There were different relationships based on type of CHC ($F=4.57$). Rheumatologic conditions had the lowest impact on families, asthma the highest and SB a medium impact.

Conclusion: Despite the visual aspects of SB and the complexity of the condition, families with SB reported less problematic impact on family than those with epilepsy and asthma.