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Expressed Emotion, Mental Health, and Functioning in Families of Children with and without Asthma

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Introduction

- High expressed emotion may be indicative of critical interactions between a parent and child, which has a negative impact on child arousal and mental and physical symptoms.
- Research examining associations between EE and child/family outcomes is mixed; these associations may be influenced by other factors such as the presence of a chronic disease or parent mental health.
- In this study of families living in an urban area, we examined associations between EE and child outcomes (anxiety/depressive symptoms) and family functioning, with parent anxiety as a covariate.
- We evaluated child asthma status as a moderator as the presence of a chronic illness may strengthen the association between EE and child/family outcomes.

Sample and Procedures

- 96 children (mean±SD age=8.83±2.03 years, 48.9% female, 92.6% African American; 47 with asthma) and their parents (81.3% annual household income<$25,000)
- Parents and children completed an observational study which included interviews and questionnaires (see Table below).
- Parents completed the Five Minute Speech Sample (FMSS), a five-minute open-ended interview that was coded to assess caregiver expressed emotion.
- Parents were asked to speak about their child for 5 minutes without interruption.
- Parent and child were interviewed separately during the research session.

FMSS Coding

- FMSS coding manual used (Magana et al., 1986): coders met weekly to discuss disagreements in ratings and come to a consensus.
- Moderate agreement between the two coders on overall expressed emotion (κ = .78), emotional over-involvement (EOI)(κ = .83), and criticism (Crit) (κ = .68).
- EOI and Crit are subscales of overall expressed emotion. EOI is a measure of a caregiver’s over-protectiveness, self-sacrifice, excessive use of praise or blame, and statements of attitude. Criticism is a measure of a caregiver’s hostility and critical remarks towards their child.

Results

- Regression analyses were conducted using PROCESS macro version 3.1. Asthma status (yes/no) was examined as a moderator.

Discussion

- Asthma status did not moderate any associations of expressed emotion with child mental health and family functioning.
- Future research is needed to confirm findings and assess how critical remarks might be associated with asthma control in a larger sample.

References

- Nathan, R. A., Sohnnessa, C. A., Kocianski, M., Schatz, M., U. J. T. Marcus, P., … Pendragon, T. B. (2007). Development of the asthma control test: a survey for assessing asthma control. Research reported in this poster was supported by VCU internal funding to the fourth and fifth authors. We appreciate the For-VA and Pediatric Asthma Research Teams at VCU. We are especially grateful to the participating children and families. Contact: dempsterkw@vcu.edu