



PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH AMONG CAREGIVERS OF PEOPLE WITH MENTAL DISORDERS DURING PANDEMIC THROUGH WHATSAPP GROUP

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ABSTRACT

Changes in all aspects of life due to the pandemic affect all levels of society without exception, including vulnerable populations such as people with mental disorders. Sudden changes in a short time can create challenges for both the patients and the families. A better understanding of the course of their illness and what preventive and promotive efforts can be made by families/caregivers during the pandemic can help improve their quality of life. Online education for caregivers/families aims to shape a better understanding of mental health and mental disorders.

Keywords: Mental Illness, Mental Health, Caregiver, Pandemic, COVID-19

INTRODUCTION

Health problems, both physical and psychological for people with mental disorders, have recently become increasingly challenging due to the coronavirus outbreak since the beginning of 2020. With limited access due to health protocols during the pandemic, the patients' health and quality of life have been affected. Thus, the family/caregiver must equip themselves with sufficient knowledge so that during this challenging period, they can still maintain, even improve the patients' quality of life. To present information and assist the families/caregivers in absorbing the information provided so that they are habituated in daily life, continuous interaction and education are carried out by experts from various fields of medicine for families/caregivers through WhatsApp (WA) digital group platform. The WA group will be a medium for information dissemination. In addition, this WA group will also be a medium or forum for online discussion that will discuss mental disorders from various aspects with various competent experts from various scientific fields.

METHODS

This community service activity called PINTER (Percakapan Interaktif Dengan Dokter) is carried out in a weekly online discussion through the WhatsApp group from July until October 2021. The online discussion participants in WhatsApp groups are families/caregivers of Schizophrenia patients in Ernaldi Bahar Mental Hospital who consented to enroll in the program. Five experts presented the material with different



competencies and scientific backgrounds, namely medical genetics, pharmacology, and psychiatry. The topics presented have a common thread in the form of efforts to understand the pandemic and its relation to mental health and efforts to maintain the health, even improving the mental health of both caregivers and the patients during the pandemic.

DISCUSSION

According to WHO, in 2017, there are currently around 450 million people who suffer from mental disorders, including schizophrenia.¹ While the prevalence of schizophrenia or psychosis in Indonesia in 2018 was 6.7 per mil households with ART with schizophrenia/psychosis mental disorders. This shows that out of 1000 households, there are 6.7 households with household members (ART) suffering from schizophrenia.² The prevalence of schizophrenia in South Sumatra in 2018 was 8 per mil of households with ART with schizophrenia/psychotic mental disorders. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-V/DSM-V, schizophrenia is a psychotic disorder that includes one or more of the following five domains: delusions, hallucinations, disoriented speech, disoriented or abnormal motor behavior (including catatonia), and negative symptoms.^{3,4}

Since March 2020, the World Health Organization has declared a pandemic for infections caused by SARS-CoV2, namely Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).^{5,6} One of the efforts to control the transmission of SARS-CoV2 and reduce the incidence of COVID-19, among others is the policy to stay at home so that you can work, study, and worship at home, in addition to the policy of maintaining distance, washing hands, and wearing masks in public places.⁷ Changes in all aspects of life affect all levels of society without exception, including vulnerable populations such as people with mental disorders.

Changes in the health care system that adapt to the pandemic have somewhat affected people's health with mental disorders and their caregivers/families. Considering the history of the disease from schizophrenia and the policies taken based on the changing pandemic situation, these two main factors can increase the risk of physical and psychological health problems in them. These health problems certainly have a broad impact, including physical, psychological, social, and even economic impacts for both patients and their families. Therefore, online educational interventions during the pandemic on mental health and mental disorders to caregivers/families are expected to be one solution to maintain and even improve the health of people with mental disorders and caregivers.



The image shows two parts of a promotional material. Part (a) is an e-flyer for an event titled 'PINTER' (Percakapan Interaktif dengan Dokter) Season 2. It is organized by the Faculty of Medicine at Universitas Sriwijaya. The event focuses on mental health, with the theme 'Mengetahui Lebih Lanjut Tentang Gangguan dan Masalah Kejiwaan'. It features six speakers: dr. Bintang Arroyantri R, Sp.KJ; dr. Miranti Dwi Hartanti, M.Si.Med; dr. Nita Parisa, M.Bmd; dr. Puji Rizki Suryani, M.Kes; dr. Ziske Maritska, M.Si.Med; and dr. R. A. Mulya Liansari, Sp.KJ. The event starts on July 23, 2021, and registration is available at bit.ly/PenyuluhanODGJ. Part (b) is a presentation slide titled 'GANGGUAN JIWA: DITURUNKAN ATAU TIDAK?' (Mental Disorders: Inherited or Not?). The slide is presented by Ziske Maritska, a Genetic Counselor, and features an illustration of a family.

Figure 1. a. E-flyer of the event poster called PINTER (Percakapan Interaktif dengan Dokter). b. One of the presentation slides presented discussing how mental disorders can be inherited.



CONCLUSION

Efforts to assist caregivers of people with mental disorders are needed during this pandemic because they, as those who care for family members who suffer from mental disorders, need support, especially during a pandemic where access to health services is limited. With the dissemination of information about schizophrenia and maintaining mental health for not only the patients but also caregivers, it is hoped that caregivers can maintain the mental health of the patients and their mental health.

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