Assessing Parental Coping in the Context of Having a Child With a Chronic or Severe Illness

Katharine Wickel, MS, LAMFT
Objective

- Understand current methodologies as it relates to assessing parental coping in this context
  - Theoretical Underpinnings
  - Assessment instruments
  - Settings and Samples
  - Strengths
  - Limitations and Future Research
Definitions

- Chronic or severe illnesses
  - Children who have been diagnosed with a physical illness that requires special health care needs that are beyond the experience of a child without such diagnosis

- Coping
  - Actions an individual may take to avoid the harmful effects of an event or any effort to control emotional distress (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978)

- Stress
  - Any “upset in the steady state of the family” (Boss, 1987, pg. 695)
Introduction

• 17-18% of US children (Bethell, Read, Blumberg, 2008)

• The number of children with chronic illnesses will continue to rise (Katz, 2002)

• Many parents will have either direct or indirect effects
  • Medical systems
  • Ability to be flexible and adapt
  • Additional challenges (Given, Stommel, Given, Osuch, Kurtz, & Kurtz, 1993; Silver, Westbrook, & Stein, 1998)
    • Low self-esteem, low parental efficacy, depression and anxiety
Theoretical Underpinnings

- Themes of perception and resources
  - Problem-focused versus emotion-focused coping
  - ABC-X model (Hill 1949)
  - Family Stress Theory (Boss, 1987)
Assessment Instruments

- **Coping Health Inventory for Parents (CHIPS)** (McCubbin, et al., 1983; McCubbin, et al., 1996)
- **The Parental Coping Strategy Inventory (PCSI)** (Yeh, 2001)
- **Ways of Coping Questionnaire** (Lazarus & Folkman, 1988; Kupst, et al., 1995)
- **Modified COPE Scale** (Sales, et al., 2008; Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989)
- **Qualitative Methods**
Settings and Samples

- Medical or Clinical Setting
- Local clinics
- Child’s diagnosis
  - Childhood cancer, cystic fibrosis, HIV, asthma, epilepsy
- Lack of diversity
  - Race/ethnicity
  - Income
Strengths

- Strong theory
- Starting to take culture into account
  - International culture
Limitations and Future Research

- Many samples lacked ethnic, cultural, and economic diversity that are represented in the United States.

- Explorations of the development of gender specific assessments.
  - Some studies have found that the gender of the parent impacts coping styles and methods (Chesler & Parry, 2001; Goble, 2004).

- Are all illnesses created equal?
  - Is it valid and reliable to use a measure that was normed on one childhood illness with populations that have children with different illnesses?
References


