**“I have no other choice”: Coping resources among FSU immigrants caring for family members with severe mental illness**

**Abstract**

**Background:** Immigrants who care for a relative with severe mental illness while they are also in the process of integration as immigrants face multiple stressors and a lack of available resources. Although Israel is a country that is largely made of immigrants, no study to date has been conducted on the coping of immigrants who care for a family member with severe mental illness.

**Study Aim:** This qualitative study examined how immigrants from the former Soviet Union cope with a family member’s severe mental illness within the context of immigrating to Israel.

**Method:** Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 32 immigrant caregivers from the former Soviet Union. The interviews were analyzed using categorical content analysis.

**Results:** An analysis of the interviews revealed four categories of coping resources that immigrants utilized: (1) personal resources – optimism and religious beliefs; (2) familial resources – a sense of commitment and familial support; (3) socio-cultural resources – workplace and engagement in leisure activities; (4) institutional resources – participation in culturally-adapted interventions in family counseling centers. The findings highlight that these resources alleviated the sense of burden felt by the immigrant caregivers, improved their coping abilities on an emotional, cognitive, and socio-cultural level, and helped them to develop a sense of resilience.

**Conclusions and implications:** Immigrants who care for a family member with severe mental illness, who, being immigrants, lack a network of familial and social support and experience ongoing adjustment difficulties in Israel, are most in need of institutional support. The present study illustrates the importance of having professionals recognize the cultural and contextual aspects of immigrant caregivers’ lives and incorporating this knowledge into the services that are offered. It also highlights the critical role of professionals in helping immigrant caregivers locate and utilize these resources.

**“I should have been more attentive”: The burden experience among immigrants from the former Soviet Union caring for a family member with severe mental illness**

Family members who care for relatives with severe mental illnesses experience a great deal of stress and a high sense of burden in their daily lives. Immigrant caregivers who care for a family member with severe mental illness, and who are in the process of immigration themselves, are exposed to a multitude of stressful and burdensome situations. However, little is known about how immigrant caregivers experience this burden and what the implications of this sense of burden are for their personal and family lives.

The current article proposes a new term – “the dual adjustment burden.” This term helps to deepen an understanding of the experience of immigrant caregivers in their unique context, identify high risk groups among them, and promote interventions and social policies that better suit their needs.