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The Role of the Media and Primary Care in the Dissemination of Evidence-Based Parenting and Family Support Interventions.

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This article examines the role of a population strategy targeting the media and professionals in primary care services as part of a comprehensive parenting and family support system to improve the health status and well-being of children.

1.1 The Importance of Dissemination

There has been general acknowledgement of the gap that exists between clinical research in psychological interventions and the practices of clinicians in the field. Effective dissemination of empirically supported interventions to clinicians in the community has been lacking, and families presenting to clinical services commonly do not receive these interventions. Many services continue to use ineffective, nonempirically supported psychotherapeutic interventions or nonevaluated parenting and family support programs.

2.1 A Population Approach to Family Intervention

The Triple P program is a multilevel parenting and family support strategy developed by the authors and colleagues at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia. The program aims to prevent severe behavioural, emotional and developmental problems in children by enhancing the knowledge, skills, and confidence of parents. It incorporates universal, selective and indicated interventions across five levels on a tiered continuum of increasing strength.

3.1 Developing an Effective Media Intervention

One way to disseminate effective parenting interventions more widely is by using the mass media. The mass media plays an important role in providing health information for the general public and television acts as the primary vehicle for mass media in today's society. Although the mass media have been used widely in the health promotion field, little is known about resulting effectiveness in the field of family intervention. There are several potential advantages of using media strategies as an information source for parenting and family issues.

4.1 Primary Care as a Setting for Prevention and Early Intervention

Rationale for Primary Care Interventions. A large number of paediatric consultations deal with parental concerns about children's behaviour, development, or school achievement. A recent family survey showed that family doctors were the professionals most frequently consulted by caregivers of children with an emotional or behavioural problem. Although primary care professionals are well positioned to provide parenting support, they are commonly underresourced and undertrained for the detection of child behaviour problems and the provision of effective mental health programs for children and families.

Triple P in Primary Care Settings. Three recent trials have assessed the impact of Triple P interventions in primary care settings. Results from these trials provide support for the efficacy of primary care staff in offering brief, early parenting support, resulting in improved parenting practices and reduced child problem behaviour. However, the introduction of a coordinated parenting support strategy may represent a change of role for many primary care practitioners.

5.1 Implications

There is a need for innovative dissemination research that examines how to optimize the application of psychological science knowledge on persuasive communication to promote better parenting practices through media interventions and existing service providers. Most of the research on health communication has not examined relationship issues within the family. Similarly, relatively few studies have systematically evaluated parenting interventions delivered through primary care services or the optimal means of dissemination to such service providers. Controlled studies examining variables that influence practitioner adoption and accurate implementation of evidence-based parenting and family interventions must be seen as a priority in the field.

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