

**10<sup>th</sup> IEPA Conference – “Looking back, moving forward”**  
**20-22 October 2016, Milan, Italy**  
**Symposium Submission Form**

**Symposium organiser: Dr Jacqueline Sin & Professor Jo Smith**

**Symposium title:**

**Siblings and friends – can they help with recovery or do they need help themselves?**

**Theme: Psychosocial interventions or Translational research**

**Symposium summary**

It is widely recognised that coping with first episode psychosis can prove challenging, not just for the individuals themselves, but for everyone in their familial and social network. Family members, siblings and friends can experience stress, distress and increased vulnerability of mental ill health themselves. Equally, siblings and friends can act as natural agents to promote recovery in the family and community context, given their shared social and cultural backgrounds and age. However, research and clinical work targeting siblings, friends and peers, remains limited. This symposium will open with a short film: 'Living with Psychosis A Siblings Perspective' produced by Simon Hall and Martin Harries from University of the West of England to set the context for the symposium. The symposium will then draw together innovative projects describing research with siblings and friends of young people with psychosis.

The first paper by Jacqueline Sin and colleagues from the UK compares siblings' clinical outcomes and caregiving experiences, with their peers and parent-carers. It is followed by Siann Bowman from Australia whose presentation explores the impact of FEP on sibling relationships. Chris Harrop and colleagues from the UK and Australia focus on friends and peers of young people affected by FEP, proposing a theoretical model to work with friends and peers. Lastly, Heather Robinson and colleagues from the UK describe the development of REACT, an online self-management intervention for families and friends coping with psychosis or bipolar disorder and the design of a large scale evaluation trial currently underway.

**First Talk – by Jacqueline Sin, Claire Henderson & Jo Smith**

**Title: Wellbeing, mental health knowledge and caregiving experiences of siblings of individuals affected by psychosis: do they differ from their peers and parent-carers?**

**Abstract**

Background: The wellbeing and caregiving experiences of family carers supporting people with psychosis has garnered increasing interest in recent years. While there is evidence that the burden of caregiving can adversely impact on parents' wellbeing, few studies have investigated whether this is also the case for siblings, who often take on caregiving responsibilities. This study investigated the wellbeing, mental health knowledge, and caregiving experiences in siblings of individuals with psychosis.

**Methods:** Using a cross-sectional study design, 90 siblings completed three validated questionnaires: Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS), Mental Health Knowledge Schedule (MAKS), and Experience of Caregiving Inventory (ECI). Data obtained were compared to general population norms and parent-carers' scores. Multi-variable regression analyses were conducted to examine relationships between questionnaire scores and demographic characteristics including age, sex, birth order, marital status, accommodation and educational level.

**Results:** Siblings, especially sisters, had significantly poorer mental wellbeing, compared to normative scores. Conversely, they had better mental health knowledge. Siblings and parent-carers had comparable high levels of negative appraisals of caregiving experiences, but siblings reported feeling more satisfied with personal experiences and relationship. Multi-variable regression analysis revealed education level to be a significant predictor for better mental health knowledge but there were no other associations between siblings' demographic factors and their outcomes.

**Conclusions:** Study findings suggest that siblings have overlapping as well as distinct needs, compared to parent-carers. Further research is required to better understand siblings' caregiving experiences so as to inform development of targeted interventions that promote wellbeing and enhance caregiving capacity.

#### **Notes**

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