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Using DMM Family Functional Formulations in interventions for children with neurodevelopmental disorders.

Andrea Landini, Beatrice Bertelli & Silvia Moniga (Italy)

andrealandini@mac.com

Topic: Clinical practice

A diagnosis based on the neuropsychological profile of the child doesn't predict reliably the results of theoretically indicated treatments, based on the second and third authors' experience with rehabilitative treatment of neurodevelopmental disorders. We decided to compare treatment as usual with treatment informed by a DMM family functional formulation (DMM-FFF). The caseload of two centers in northern Italy was assessed for family variables, and success of treatment, both measurable and perceived (by family and treatment team). Then we applied DMM assessments to incoming new cases, sharing the formulation with the treatment team. The results of the treatment (after a suitable time interval) will be assessed for the second group of patients as for the first one. The patients include a range of diagnoses varying for degree of impact on family life (from speech disorders to mental retardation, Down syndrome and autism). There is no "new" treatment involved in our project; instead, the DMM-FFF is supposed to help the treatment team to prioritize the usual interventions to make them more fit to the family needs. The project is now in the second year. We will report on the progress and on some of the observed effects of adding the DMM assessments to the basic array of neuropsychological assessments.

How we used the DMM

The DMM-FFF, added to the assessment of the neuropsychological aspects of the observed problem, changes the way families are perceived by the treatment team, including the reversal of meaning of some observed aspects of family compliance. Namely, some of the families that refused certain aspects of the treatment offered were the families who were best able to reflect and integrate new information. Worries about the perceived rigidity of these families were challenged by the DMM family formulations.

What can be contributed to the DMM

A study of the clinical utility and feasibility of the most complex and complete form of DMM assessment, the DMM-FFF. We are also exploring how different degrees of completeness of the DMM family assessments, due to the degree of availability of the families to the assessment procedures, are impacting the coherence and clarity of the DMM-FFF.