

Whatsapp: a new instrument for support in Hemophilia care

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Background:

- Group therapy for parents with new diagnosed children in the center
- Participants meet once a month for a 2-3 hours session.
- WhatsApp Messenger is a proprietary, cross-platform instant messaging subscription service for smartphones that uses the internet for communication

Contents of group therapy:

- Discussing problems with the children, Hemophilia treatment, parenthood, relationship with spouse and with the environment.
- Communication and administration through telephone calls, messages and emails.
- One of the parents decided to open a "Whatsapp group" including parents and myself, in order to enable a more efficient mode of messages transfer.

A picture of some of the mothers in the WhatsApp group

Method:

8 families are taking part in the Whatsapp group, plus me, their social worker.

All the participants have to have smartphones.

In a short period of time the Whatsapp became a very strong tool for connecting and getting immediate answers to any kind of problem; everyday living questions around Hemophilia, how to treat, seeking for advise etc.



Results:

People became very close, sharing more and more intimate questions and experiences. They are becoming as a big supportive family.

An example of one of the conversations performed through the WhatsApp

Guys does anyone know how to use the blood's plaster

You put it on the blood. Don't wash it. If you wash it, it will not stick. It has to be in contact with the blood

A whole one?

Put a whole one
You can disinfect the area before you put it but there has to be blood
Did you manage?

Yes it was crazy the question if he needs stitches and now we don't take off the plaster

A Special shirt was made for the children of the group



"I have the X factor"

Conclusion:

Whatsapp became a very strong tool for communication and support especially when we don't have group meetings

Questions arising:

- Should the caregiver be part of the group?
- Should he/she interfere in the conversations?
- The ethical question raised: how far can we go in giving professional information by smartphone application as WhatsApp.
- We currently begin a research comparing the cohesion of the therapy group using WhatsApp and the other groups which get group therapy without keeping communication through WhatsApp.
- We can use new communication methods for helping and supporting Hemophilia families.

