

You cannot divorce the Hemophilia

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Introduction and Objective: You cannot divorce Hemophilia, but can parents of a child with Hemophilia divorce each other? Couples who have children with Hemophilia (CWH) have to deal with all the stress that every couple has to deal with, like power struggles, questions of loyalty, differences of habits and norms they've learned in their origin families, difficulties in agreeing on the right distance and borders between the new family and their family of origin, etc.

In a regular family, when a child is born, the couples turn to parents. They have to deal with additional stress like :

- Disagreements in the way they see the best way to raise a child.
- They have to decide on the right boundaries between them and the child.
- The habits and manners each of them want the child to have.
- The amount of independence vs dependence they want the child to have.
- Whether or not to spoil the child.
- Finding the balance between spending time on self fulfilment vs family needs.
- Question of religiosity, and so on.

The addition of a child usually also puts on the couples more expenses and complicate the economic situation. Each additional child who is born adds to these stresses. The factors that most influence how much the couple will be able to cope with all these stress factors are mostly the quality of communication between the couple, the flexibility in their personalities and thought patterns, the amount of love and respect to each other and the commitment they feel to the family.

Parents of CWH have, in addition to these, special stress factors like:

- Anxiety about the child's health.
- Financial difficulties due to the need to be absent from their day jobs in order to take care of the CWH (infusing the factors, nursing at home or at the hospital).
- The husband and/or his family blame the wife (overtly or in a hidden way) for causing or "bringing" the Hemophilia onto the child.
- Difficulties on agreeing on the right distance and borders between the new family and their family of origin usually becomes more complicated: some couples need the assistant of the parents to take care of the CWH, while some prefer to have more distance from the family of origin and even not let them know the secret that they have a CWH.
- Dealing with the lack of attention they give to the CWH`s siblings and their reaction to this situation.
- The dilemma of finding the balance between spending time on self fulfilment vs family needs is intensified due to the parents' need to spend more time in taking care of the CWH when he bleeds, and keep the child safe while playing and in everyday life.

When the stress level between the couple become unbearable for one of them or both, one of the common solutions is getting a divorce.

As we've mentioned above, the stress level in a family with CWH is much higher than in a regular family. It appears important to find out if it influences the divorce percentage.

The objective was to find out whether the percentage of divorce in such couples is different than couples who do not have a CWH.

Materials and Methods: We've compared the divorce percentage of all the parents of CWH as appears in the database of The Israel National Hemophilia Center, to the divorce percentage in the general population published by the Central Bureau of Statistics (Israel).

Results: We've found that about 30% of all couples in Israel got a divorce during the period that was checked (1995-2015). Surprisingly, the percentage of couples who have a child with Hemophilia (CWH) that got a divorce was less than 5%.

Conclusions: We found that there are some factors that might explain the relatively small percentage of divorce in couples with CWH, despite all the stress factors:

- The responsibility that the couple feel about their CWH
- The changes in their perspective of viewing other problems when they compare them to the stress and problems of the Hemophilia.

Further research is needed in order to determine the exact factors that contribute to a higher chance of parents of CWH to getting a divorce in order to make efforts to support them and improve their capability to cope with their stressors.

