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EXPRESSED EMOTION AND PARENTAL ATTITUDES TOWARD CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS

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Introduction: Individuals who grow up in alcoholic families seem to have a family environment and climate different from those who grow up in non alcoholic families.

Objectives: Data on expressed emotion and parental attitudes in alcoholic family are lacking.

Aims: Study the level of expressed emotion and the parental attitudes in children of alcoholics (COAs) compared with children of non alcoholics (non COAs).

Methods: The Level of Expressed Emotion Scale (LEES) and the Parental Attitudes Scale (PAD) were used to measure respectively the expressed emotion and the family climate.

The LEES was filled by the COAs or by the non COAs; the PAD was filled by their significant parent. COAs and non COAs were matched for age and gender.

Results: COAs perceived a statistically lower level of intrusiveness from their parents and a significantly higher emotional response and attitudes toward illness from their parents than non COAs. According to the PAD, there was no difference in the family climate between the two groups. When correlations between LEES and PAD were evaluated, among COAs high level of expressed tolerance (LEES tolerance/expectation subscale) was significantly correlated with a low dominance in the children (PAD Dominance/Submissiveness); among controls, high level of expressed emotion (LEES total score) was significantly correlated with lower pleasure in the children (PAD Pleasure/Displeasure subscale).

Conclusions: COAs and non COAs seem to perceive the emotion expressed in their family environment differently and correlate it with their parental attitudes according to a different pattern.