LATINA AND AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE CAREGIVERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR CHILDREN’S EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO ASTHMA

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Purpose: Approximately 7.1 million children in the US suffer from the effects of asthma. In an earlier exploratory study, asthma-related emotional functioning quality of life scores were found to be worse for Latino children when compared with non-Latino white and non-Latino black children. The purpose of the present study was to explore minority parents or caregivers perceptions of their children’s emotional responses to asthma.

Methods: An exploratory study using qualitative interviews was conducted at the last data collection visit in a longitudinal study. The sample included four Latina and four African American female caregivers of children (grades 2-5) who have asthma. Participants were asked open-ended questions about their perceptions of their children’s emotional responses to asthma. Major themes as well as subthemes of transcribed interviews were identified using content analysis.

Findings: The caregivers’ stories reflect the interactions between caregiver and child when responding to asthma. The following themes were identified when analyzing the data. The major caregiver themes were the caregivers’ descriptions of their responses to their children’s asthma. The major child themes were what caregivers identified as their children’s responses to asthma. The major caregiver theme was “I’ve Got Your Back” with four subthemes: “You Don’t Need to Worry,” “I’m Never Too Busy For You,” “I’ll Watch Over You,” and “Sometimes I Get Scared Too.” The major child theme was “I’m Not Always Sure What’s Happening; But I Trust You,” with six subthemes: “I Get Scared,” “It Can Be Embarrassing,” “Why Me?”, “I Get Annoyed and Frustrated,” “I May Not Talk Much,” and “I May Get Excited or Anxious.”

Conclusions: Caregivers’ perceptions of their children’s emotional responses were found to be intrinsically linked to how caregivers dealt with asthma. Sons were described as being quiet and rarely talking emotionally about the effects of asthma. Whereas, daughters were mostly described by their caregivers as being verbal, worried, and excited when experiencing the effects of asthma. A salient question that emerged from this study was whether the children’s responses were related to their caregivers’ actions or responses to the effects of asthma.