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CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MOOD DISORDERS PROGRAM (PROACTH)

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Background: Mood disorders have a multifactorial etiology comprising genetics and environmental aspects in a complex interplay between them. Depression and bipolar disorder have been increasingly diagnosed in children and adolescents in the recent years. A meta-analysis about the epidemiology of bipolar disorder in youth showed that the overall rate was 1.8%. Concerning depression in youth the lifetime prevalence varies from 3% in children to almost 20% in adolescents.
Objective: To describe a treatment and research program (PROACTH) for children and adolescents with mood disorders (depressive and bipolar disorder).
Method: The program operates from Monday through Friday. Patients are referred to the program from primary care health services. On admission, patients were screened with standardized instruments. After that, the patients were submitted to pharmacological and psychosocial interventions. Finally, the follow-up period depends on each patient illness evolution. Also, the team encompasses child psychiatrists, systemic family therapists, psychologists and social workers.
Results: The combination of pharmacotherapy and psychosocial interventions (individual psychotherapy and family therapy) led to a decrease of symptoms and a better psychosocial functioning.
Conclusion: In spite of the complex interplay between genetic and environmental factors usually found in children with mood disorders, timely and appropriate interventions are efficacious to achieve a favourable outcome.

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