

Explaining Caregiver Resistance to Intervention for Adults with Mild Disability in Singapore

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Abstract

Psychotic illnesses and seizures have a higher prevalence within populations with intellectual disabilities compared to the general population, with some conditions having onset only in adulthood. An important part of our work with adults with intellectual disabilities is to empower caregivers to better care for our clients. This can be challenging as caregivers of persons with intellectual disabilities may harbour concerns towards medical intervention in the form of taking medication or consulting a psychiatric doctor, preferring to draw instead on alternative beliefs about cause and cure.

This study seeks to better understand caregiver resistance to medical intervention, alternative explanations of psychotic and epileptic symptoms, and factors that may help improve receptivity to medical treatment. We outline forms of resistance through case studies of individuals of different religious and ethnic backgrounds receiving vocational training in a sheltered workshop for adults with mild intellectual disability. Semi-structured interviews with four caregivers were conducted and analysed using grounded theory principles to explore caregiver perceptions of medical intervention. Key themes undergirding resistance to treatment are discussed. The paper concludes with guiding recommendations for working sensitively and compassionately with caregivers while prioritizing the immediate welfare of our clients.