

## FAMILY CLIMATE, EXPRESSED EMOTION, AND PARENTAL ATTITUDES IN FAMILIES OF ALCOHOLICS

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**Introduction:** Parental alcoholism may lead to adverse psychological outcomes for those who grow up in such family environments.

**Objectives:** Several studies show that children of alcoholics (COAs) live in family climates characterized by conflict, unpredictability, and manifestations of contempt. Moreover, COAs are exposed to a high level of expressed emotion due, for instance, to threats and denigration.

**Aims:** We compared a group of COAs with a group of non COAs measuring the family climate, the level of expressed emotion and the parental attitudes on the basis of both children and parents' point of view.

**Methods:** 25 COAs (mean age  $17,8 \pm 3,3$  years) and 25 non COAs (mean age  $18,3 \pm 3,3$  years), matched for age and sex, were evaluated in the frame of an observational naturalistic study design. Self-administered rating scales were used to assess the level of expressed emotion in the family (Level of Expressed Emotion Scale - LEES), the parental (Parental Attitudes Scales - PAD) and family (Family Attitudes Questionnaire - FAQ) attitudes.

**Results:** The two groups did differ for FAQ total score and for the FAQ subscale assessing the relation between parents. They also differed for the level of expressed emotion (i.e., LEES total score) and for the LEES subscale assessing tolerance and expectations.

**Conclusions:** COAs are characterized by the perception of a negative family climate that is primarily expressed in terms of conflict and deterioration of relationship between parents.