
ABSTRACT

Practices of a support group for patients with rheumatic diseases: A study on the effect of assistance and the role of managers

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This study examined a support group for patients with rheumatic diseases that was held once a month for three years and managed by a psychologist who was also a fellow patient. We evaluated how effective the group was in supporting patients and identified the role of managers. We investigated two cases in detail. This evaluation revealed the following: the group served as a place of belonging for the patients; it provided patients an opportunity to reaffirm the nature of the disease, thus encouraging them to adapt to their treatments; and it also provided patients with an opportunity to find positive meaning in living with their disease, allowing them to rebuild their lives. We found that the manager fulfilled the role of assessing, identifying themes, providing an environment of equality, and encouraging members to share information. As the support group encouraged the psychologist as well as the other members to understand themselves and verbalize their feelings, we concluded that it provides a fresh perspective in psychological support—one that will help further psychological research.

Key Words: rheumatic diseases, support group, role of managers, active involvement with the disease
