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In Aotearoa, adolescent mental health needs have nearly doubled since 2016/17 (Ministry of Health, 2017). Emotional dysregulation (ED) is a key feature underlying many mental health challenges, and parenting a young person with ED can place significant emotional, relational, and systemic strain on caregivers (Sheikhan et al., 2021). With stretched mental health services and adolescents often reluctant to engage in treatment (Stubbing & Gibson, 2021), it is vital that parents feel equipped to support their adolescent, particularly during periods of distress. Yet, the support needs of caregivers themselves have received little attention. This qualitative study explored the support-seeking experiences of 17 parents and caregivers of adolescents (aged 12–18) with lived experience of ED in Aotearoa New Zealand. Data was collected through 13 semi-structured interviews and 4 surveys. Analysis is currently underway using reflexive thematic analysis and an interpretive description approach to identify key themes. This presentation will share initial findings, developed themes, and illustrative excerpts from the data. Discussion will focus on the challenges parents face in accessing support, what has been helpful, and how services can be improved to better meet their needs. These insights will help inform the mental health sector in developing more accessible, effective supports for caregivers, ultimately aiming to improve mental health outcomes for adolescents, strengthen whānau wellbeing, and ease pressure on mental health services in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Keywords

Adolescent mental health; emotional dysregulation; parenting; caregiver support-seeking; caregiver experiences

References

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