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Abstract:

BACKGROUND: "Systems of care" are strengths-based approaches to treating adolescents and others with disruptive disorders. However, little is known about why some adolescents improve and others do not. **OBJECTIVE:** To examine changes in personal strengths and family functioning as predictors of behavioral and social functioning among adolescents with disruptive disorders who participated in a system of care program. **DESIGN:** Secondary analyses of data from 114 adolescents (12-17 years of age) with disruptive disorders and their caregivers who participated in the Dawn Project Evaluation Study. Caregivers completed in-depth interviews conducted by trained data collectors using standardized questionnaires. Baseline and 12-month data are reported here. **RESULTS:** Improvement in personal strengths was a significant predictor of improvement in adolescent behavioral and social functioning, controlling for demographics (p <

.001). CONCLUSION: In adolescents with disruptive disorders, psychiatric nurses should focus on enhancing adolescents' personal strengths to improve behavioral and social functioning.

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