(P16) IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH: WHEN ILLNESS WEDS THE FAMILY
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Background: This workshop will examine two marriages dealing with the biopsychosocial/spiritual and family life cycle dynamics of living with and navigating the challenges and demands of chronic illness. Two marriage and family therapists, who have experienced illness collectively for over 40 years, will use their personal family examples through filmed interviews, in which all members discuss living with illness and how it has affected their lives within the family context. Objectives: Key points of the presentation are foundationally based on clinicians’ significant findings within quantitative methodology using a population of 200 couples in which one partner has a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis (MS). Issues that couples and families commonly deal with will be addressed during the workshop, including inevitable cognitive, physical, emotional, and relational role changes; management and prevention of caregiver burnout for both spouse and children; and conflict experienced by the caregiving family members in the individuation and differentiation process. Methods: The professionally edited videotapes will highlight how the marital structure changes and evolves, the ways in which the family system adapts to the change created, and how therapists can work most effectively with partners and families to lower stress and strengthen resiliency and unity as the illness becomes a significant force within the family unit. Results: Participants will discover unique experiences that families commonly deal with regarding illness and role change within marriage. Participants will gain therapeutic knowledge and evidence-based information regarding biopsychosocial/spiritual issues when living with illness. Participants will obtain concrete tools to work effectively with couples and families dealing with illness. Conclusions: This presentation will give a bird's-eye view of two therapists’ unique family illness stories that intertwine media and therapist self-reflection and draw from participants’ knowledge, questions, and experience in a group discussion format.

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