Teenager with a Dying Parent - Teenagers’ Experiences

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Conclusion
This study contributed with knowledge about great feelings of responsibility and loneliness among teenagers who has a dying parent. Healthcare professionals in palliative care could work to acknowledge and try to support the teenagers to feel involved, less lonely and less burdened by responsibility. An important aspect is also to support the healthy parent enough and thereby reduce the experience of responsibility from the teenager.

Introduction
Being a teenager living with a dying parent is well known to be distressing with a significant impact on teenagers psychological well-being. To support teenagers and prevent long-term psychological consequences we need to find out more about teenagers experiences.

Purpose
To describe how teenagers experience living with a severely ill dying parent.

Method
Repeated qualitative interviews were conducted with ten teenagers that had lost a parent within a year. The parent had received specialist palliative care by the time of death. Qualitative content analyses were used for analyses.

”I was worried about mam...she would be depressed...when dad died...”

One teen told about the thoughts when the disease progressed “You began thinking more and more that it is not getting better in the same way as before.”

Support

Result
The teenagers described an overall feeling of responsibility. In different ways they tried to take responsibility for the ill parent, the healthy parent, the everyday family life and their siblings. While carrying this responsibility they experienced loneliness and tried to adjust to the situation in different ways by being loyal to their parents. In their process to understand that the parent is dying they prepared by observing and trying to make sense of the illness symptoms they notice. To deal with these experiences support has been determinant. Feeling trust to and support from the parents makes them feel more involved and less lonely and responsible.