



# Parents' concerns about their child's health condition and effectiveness in managing the child's crying, sleeping and eating behaviour.

## Results of a large sample study in Hungary

Noémi Scheuring dr<sup>1</sup>, Ildikó Danis PhD<sup>2</sup>, Tünde Németh dr<sup>3</sup>, Antal Czinner Prof.<sup>1</sup>, László Szabó Prof.<sup>1,4</sup>

1) Heim Pál Children Hospital, Budapest – 2) Semmelweis University, Budapest, Hungary, Bright Future Ltd., Göd, Hungary – 3) National Institute for Health Development, Budapest, Hungary – 4) Family Care Methodology Department, Institute of Health Science, Semmelweis University, Budapest, Hungary

### Introduction:

The 'HEALTHY OFFSPRING' project examined the prevalence of behaviour regulation problems in early childhood and the significance of different risk factors behind them. Parental concerns about the children and the caretaking process were measured by questionnaires.

### Aims of the study:

In this study we examined the caregivers' difficulties and emotional distress in taking care of a sick child and its connections to general behavioural regulation problems.

### Materials and methods:

1164 families of 0–3-year-old children were included from Heim Pál Children's Hospital Budapest and the local regions. For this analysis only the questionnaire data of mothers (n=1133) were used.

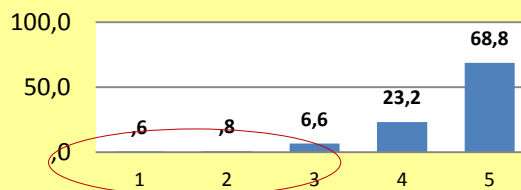
### Program 'FOR HEALTHY OFFSPRING'

- Questionnaires asked detailed information on:
  - parents' socioeconomic status,
  - medical and psychological characteristics of pregnancy and delivery,
  - the child's medical status and behaviour
  - classical regulation problems (crying, feeding, sleeping).

The applied pack of questionnaires were edited by our own team.  
Editors: Scheuring, Danis and Gervai and they are considered to be basic questionnaires

### Results:

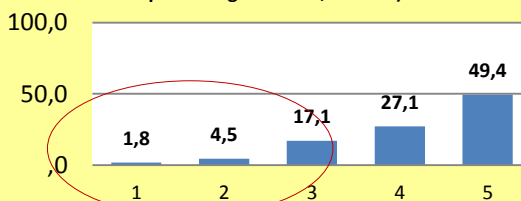
**A) Do you feel that you notice easily if your child is sick?**  
(1= very hardly, 5= very easily; percentages shown) (n=1097)



- Caregivers usually notice easily if their child is sick ( $M \pm SD = 4,6 \pm 0,7$  in 5-level Likert scale).
- 68,8% notices sickness very easily.
- However, 8% of the mothers feel uncertainty about it.

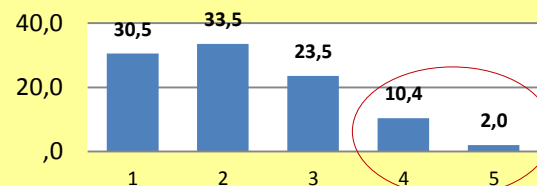
- 12,4% of the mothers perceived their child as a 'sickly' one. (n=1097; 4-5 points on a five-point Likert scale)

**B) Is it challenging for you to administer medication to your child?**  
(1= very big problem, 5= no problem at all. percentages shown; n=1097)



- Drug administration generally does not mean a difficulty for the caregivers ( $M \pm SD = 4,2 \pm 1,0$  in 5-level Likert-scale).
- 49,4% have no problem at all.
- For 23,4% of the mothers it is a problematic issue.

**C) Does your child gets sick often and easily?**  
(1= not at all, 5= very much; percentages shown; n=1097)



### Health conditions showed significant ( $p < 0,001$ ) moderate ( $Rho = 0,2-0,3$ ) correlations with some behavioural variables.

- The more the children are sickly, usually the less frequently they eat and sleep. Caregivers who notice easier if the child is sick, thought that they better understand the child's signals in general.
- Their children cry less and they find it easier to comfort them.
- Interestingly, these children sleep less and these caregivers feel more stress because of sleep onset problems.
- Those who find drug administration difficult, are also less successful in comforting the crying child who may have more feeding difficulties and feel more stress because of sleep onset difficulties.

### Conclusion:

The parental self-efficacy in caretaking of a sick infant or toddler has systematic moderate correlations in parental management of general behavioural regulation problems. We emphasise the importance of professional support of parental self-efficacy, since it has positive effect on the well-being of every member of the family.