

The burden on informal caregivers caring for a family member

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Keywords: burden, home care, quality of life, informal caregiver, care recipient

Caring for geriatric patients is becoming an increasingly common phenomenon today. For caregivers, it represents a period characterized by many changes, which often place a burden on their lives.

Aim

The main objective of the study was to determine the level of burden on home caregivers caring for chronically ill geriatric patients. The main objective was divided into sub-objectives: to determine the time demands of home care for chronically ill patients, the quality of life of home caregivers, their level of physical and emotional health, and the characteristics of their social relationships.

Methods and research sample

A quantitative empirical survey was conducted using the standardized Caregiver Burden Inventory questionnaire (Novak & Guest, 1989). The survey sample consisted of 58 informal caregivers living in municipalities belonging to the Regional Association of Towns and Municipalities of Rudohorie (RZMO) (which brings together 16 municipalities in eastern Slovakia) who care for geriatric patients in their home environment. The vast majority of the survey participants were men (62%), with an average age of 64 and an average length of caregiving of 3.5 years.

Results

Based on the average time difficulty score of 2.71, we conclude that caregiving is very time-consuming. The average quality of life score for caregivers was 1.74, indicating that informal caregivers do not view their personal lives negatively because of caregiving. The average physical health score was 2.84, indicating that caregiving has an impact on the physical health of informal caregivers. Emotional health is not a key issue in caregiving, as indicated by the average score of

0.95. The average score for social relationships was 1.74, which means that caregivers sometimes have problems in their relationships with their partners due to caregiving, and this can sometimes be reflected in their relationships with other family members or loved ones. A comparative analysis between male and female informal caregivers showed that caregiving is more demanding for women than for men, as they reported more problems in all areas.

Conclusion

In our survey, the most problematic areas were time demands and physical health. Respondents scored relatively high in these two areas, indicating that caregiving can contribute to the deterioration of the informal caregiver's health as well as to a loss of time for their personal life.

Reference

Novak, M., & Guest, C. (1989). Caregiver response to Alzheimer's disease. *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 28(1), 67-79.