

Depression, Spirituality and Caregiver Burden among Family Caregivers of Cancer Patients

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Abstract

Research on family caregivers has been growing over the last decade with the understanding that family caregiving is no longer a normative process. The process of caregiving has been rendered infinitely more complex with the rise in rates of chronic illness, the managed care movement and the breakdown of the strong social support systems inherent to the joint family system. Caregiving outcomes range from poor physical and mental health to altered lifestyles and even, a major financial crisis owing to treatment expenses. The current study examined depression, spirituality and caregiver burden in a sample of sixty cancer caregivers in Bangalore. The various socio-demographic correlates of depression were also examined. Data was collected using the Center for Epidemiology Scale – Depression (Radloff), the Spirituality Index of Well-being (Daaleman and Frey) and the Modified Caregiver Strain Index (Robinson). The results revealed that caregivers who perceived greater caregiver burden were more depressed. Aspects of caregiving like managing finances, time and symptom burden during treatment emerged to be significantly related to depression. Caregivers who reported a higher degree of spiritual functioning were less depressed. The results underscore the need to incorporate the family, especially the family caregiver, into the purview of cancer care. Elementary steps like psychosocial assessments, psycho-education and supportive therapy may prove beneficial in modifying the risk of physical and psychological morbidity that prolonged or difficult caregiving entails.

Keywords: Caregiving, depression, spirituality, cancer

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