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Insights into Caregiver Well-being in Chronic Dialysis - Assessing Burden and Depression : A Cross-Sectional Study

Lydia Kamaruzaman[1], Rozita Mohd[1], Siti Mariyam Saniman[1], Azlin Baharudin[2], Azmawati Mohamad Nawi[3]
[1]Department of Internal Medicine-Nephrology, Faculty Of Medicine, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia
[2]Department of Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, University Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia
[3]Department of Department of Community Health, Faculty of Medicine, University Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia

Objectives : This study delves into the impact of chronic dialysis on the physical and psychological well-being of caregivers. The primary objectives are to evaluate caregiver characteristics, their burden, depression, and to understand patients' perceptions of their caregivers' burdens.

Methods : Conducted as a cross-sectional study, caregivers were independently interviewed, completed Zarith Burden Index (ZBI) questionnaires for burden assessment and Patient Health Questionnaires-9 (PHQ-9) for depression screening. Meanwhile, dialysis patients completed the Cousineau self-perceived burden questionnaires.

Results : Recruiting 125 patients and 125 caregivers, caregivers, with a mean age of 46.4 ± 13.5 years, were primarily female (62%), employed (60%), spouses (51.2%), and possessed tertiary education (34%). Patients, aged 56.9 ± 13.4 years, were 55.2% male, with 74.4% on haemodialysis. Overall, caregivers perceived a low burden (mean ZBI score 19.9 ± 13.6), with 56.8% reporting little or no burden, 31.2% mild to moderate, and 15% moderate to severe burden. Chinese ethnicity exhibited a significant association with caregiver burden ($p = 0.039$). No associations were found with demographic variables or care-related factors. Depression levels among caregivers were low (mean PHQ-9 score 4.62 ± 4.64), with 53.6% reporting 'no to minimal' depression, 34.4% mild, and 12% moderate to severe depressive symptoms. Factors contributing to depression included being female ($p = 0.05$), age < 60 ($p = 0.035$), care duration < 2 years ($p = 0.047$), and dialysis duration < 5 years ($p = 0.024$). Importantly, dialysis modalities, education, and employment did not correlate with depression. Patients perceived caregivers' burden with a mean score of 27.8 ± 10.51, and 71% felt caregivers had a moderate to severe burden. Female ($p = 0.001$), single ($p = 0.05$), and working ($p = 0.008$) patients were more likely to perceive caregivers as overburdened.

Conclusions : The study reveals low burden among caregivers but a significant proportion experiences depression.