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Assessment of prevalence of psychiatric illness among care givers of cancer patients

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Abstract

Background: Psychiatric illness is increasingly becoming a major public health problem. Caregivers, also referred as informal caregivers, are people who provide essential support to cancer patients throughout the trajectory of the illness. Hence; the present study was conducted for assessing prevalence of psychiatric illness among care givers of cancer patients.

Materials and Methods: A total of 100 caregivers of cancer patients were enrolled. Complete demographic and clinical data of all the care givers was enrolled. Caregivers with previous history of any other systemic illness or any psychiatric morbidity were excluded. Psychiatric illness among caregivers was assessed. All the results were recorded and analysed by SPSS software.

Results: 52 caregivers were affected with psychiatric illness. Out of 52 caregivers with psychiatric illness, 50 percent of the caregivers were spouse/partner of the patient while 23.09 percent of the caregivers were the child. Among the 52 patients with psychiatric illness, 34.65 percent of the caregivers had panic disorder while 28.85 percent of the caregivers had depressive disorder.

Conclusion: Caregivers of cancer patients are significantly affected psychiatric illness and hence; needs adequate psychiatric counselling.

Keywords: caregivers, cancer

Introduction

Psychiatric illness is increasingly becoming a major public health problem. There has been a shift in the care of psychiatric patients in institutions to home care with larger involvement of community than the conventional in-hospital treatment. This may inadvertently lead to increased burden on the family members and relatives who are caregiving of psychiatric patients. Caregivers are defined as persons caring for patients, most of whom are relatives of the patients^[1-3]

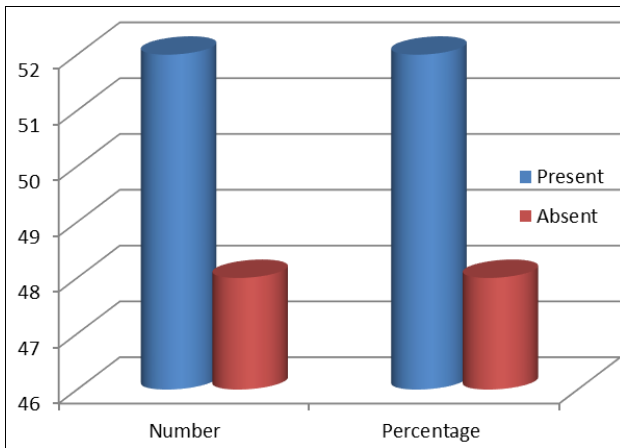
Cancer not only takes a toll on the quality of the lives and functioning of individuals who are diagnosed with and dealing with cancer, but also on the care givers of these individuals. Caregivers, also referred as informal caregivers, are people (most commonly partners or spouses) who provide essential support to cancer patients throughout the trajectory of the illness. These individuals offer practical help, psychological support, emotional help, and sometimes assistance with everyday life activities such as bathing, dressing and feeding. Although caregivers complain little, they often experience a great deal of uncertainty, concern and lack of hope^[4-7]. Hence; the present study was conducted for assessing prevalence of psychiatric illness among care givers of cancer patients.

Materials and Methods

The present study was conducted for assessing prevalence of psychiatric illness among care givers of cancer patients. A total of 100 caregivers of cancer patients were enrolled. Complete demographic and clinical data of all the care givers was enrolled. Caregivers with previous history of any other systemic illness or any psychiatric morbidity were excluded. Based on the International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision Diagnostic Criteria for Research psychiatric illness was diagnosed, and the severity was assessed. Psychiatric illness among caregivers was assessed. All the results were recorded and analysed by SPSS software.

Results

A total of 100 caregivers of cancer patients were included in the present study. Among these 100 patients, 52 caregivers were affected with psychiatric illness. Out of 52 caregivers with psychiatric illness, 50 percent of the caregivers were souse/partner of the patient while 23.09 percent of the caregivers were the child. Among the 52 patients with psychiatric illness, 34.65 percent of the caregivers had panic disorder while 28.85 percent of the caregivers had depressive disorder. Anxiety disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder were seen in 15.38 percent and 13.46 percent of the caregivers.



Graph 1: Psychiatric illness among caregivers

Table 1: Relationship of caregiver to the cancer patient

Relationship	Number of patients	Percentage
Spouse/partner	26	50
Child	12	23.09
Sibling	8	15.39
Friend	2	3.84
Parents	2	3.84
An other	2	3.84

Table 2: Spectrum of psychiatric illness

Psychiatric illness	Number of patients	Percentage
Depressive disorder	15	28.85
Anxiety disorder	8	15.38
Panic disorder	18	34.62
Post-traumatic stress disorder	7	13.46
Others	4	7.69
Total	52	100

Discussion

Cancer patient caregivers play an important role in patient's disease management and palliation which may adversely affect their own health in the longer run. Increasing stress due to increased duration of caregiving produces marked changes in neurohormonal and inflammatory processes which may increase the risk of morbidity and mortality among caregivers. Caregiver's time and effort, use of material and emotional resources, and social life compromise deteriorates caregiver's quality of life. With ever-increasing population, there is a trend towards shortened hospital stay but more outpatient/home care that has put more burdens on family and close relatives involving emotional and physical sacrifices with profound economic consequences [7-10]. Hence; the present study was

conducted for assessing prevalence of psychiatric illness among care givers of cancer patients.

A total of 100 caregivers of cancer patients were included in the present study. Among these 100 patients, 52 caregivers were affected with psychiatric illness. Out of 52 caregivers with psychiatric illness, 50 percent of the caregivers were souse/partner of the patient while 23.09 percent of the caregivers were the child. Sahadevan S *et al.* studied the prevalence and determinants of depression in caregivers of breast cancer. A semi-structured pro forma was used to collect the clinical data under patient, caregivers, and care characteristics. The prevalence of depression in caregivers was 52.5%. Among them, 35% had mild depression, 16% had moderate depression, and 2% had severe depression. Spousal caregivers, those who resided with the patient, those providing financial support and those with noncaring domestic responsibilities appeared as vulnerable determinants in univariate analysis. However, multivariate analysis did not support the same. Depression is common among caregivers of patients with breast cancer. There is a need for focused interventions for this group, which may improve the outcome of the patient as well [11].

In the present study, among the 52 patients with psychiatric illness, 34.65 percent of the caregivers had panic disorder while 28.85 percent of the caregivers had depressive disorder. Anxiety disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder were seen in 15.38 percent and 13.46 percent of the caregivers. Padmaja G *et al.* explored the relationships between depression, anxiety, distress, and somatization in cancer patients and their caregivers along with age, gender, and relationship. Four-Dimensional Symptom Questionnaire was used to measure depression, anxiety, distress, and somatization of cancer patients and their caregivers. The sample had 200 participants, with 100 patients (male = 47 and female = 53) and 100 caregivers. (Male = 36 and female = 64) selected by purposive sampling method. Significant correlations were found between cancer patients' depression and anxiety, and caregivers' depression, anxiety, distress, and somatization; patients' distress and somatization, and caregivers' anxiety and age, respectively. It was also found that anxiety was a significant predictor of distress in patients, and that caregivers' depression, anxiety, distress, and somatization significantly predicted depression and anxiety in cancer patients. The association between depression, anxiety, distress, and somatization of caregivers and patients indicates the need for psychological interventions to manage these problems of caregivers, which would in turn help managing the identical symptoms in patients [12].

Conclusion

Caregivers of cancer patients are significantly affected psychiatric illness and hence; needs adequate psychiatric counselling.

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