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FAMILY BURDEN IN ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE

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Objective: There are no published data on how family burden changes over time in alcoholism. We present 6-month follow-up data on the burden of families of alcohol dependent individuals.

Methods: The sample comprised 87 caregivers (63 females, 24 males) of alcohol dependent individuals who completed a 4-6 week inpatient alcohol detoxification in the Specialized Drug and Alcohol Addiction Clinic at the Eginition Hospital, Athens University Medical School. During hospitalization, a brief supportive intervention for the relatives took place. After detoxification all participants were followed-up as outpatients for a 6-month period in an affiliated service. Burden and psychopathology of caregivers were assessed with the Burden of Care Scale, and the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28). T-tests for paired samples were used for comparisons between different time points (admission-discharge-six months). A logistic regression model was used to identify factors which influence relatives' relief.

Results: Caregivers exhibited high scores of burden in terms of financial, household, interpersonal relations and parental roles at admission; mild psychopathological symptoms were also recorded. By the end of detoxification scores significantly decreased in most relatives (admission vs. discharge, $p < .000$); this improvement was determined by the patients' sobriety.

Conclusions: Alcohol dependence may have a considerable impact on family interaction as shown by the high scores of burden and mild psychopathology recorded in the caregivers. Our findings suggest that the relatives' relief was dependent on the achievement of abstinence and the number of relapses. Therefore, a brief supportive intervention is recommended.