
CHARACTER OF THE RELATIONSHIP WITH ALZHEIMER PATIENT AND THE PSYCHOLOGICAL COSTS OF CARE AMONG CAREGIVERS

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Introduction: Alzheimer's disease (AD) is the most common form of dementia. What is less apparent to the casual observer are the psychological costs borne by the caregiver. Their lives are marked with significant changes concerning family relationships and social life.

Aims: The purpose of this study was to define the correlation between the psychophysical functioning of the AD patient, the quality of caregiver-sufferer relations and the psychological costs borne (depression and burden) by the caregiver.

Method: The design is a cross-sectional study. This study encompassed 292 caregivers. The following questionnaire methods were used: BDI, Caregiver Burden/Burnout Inventory, Emotional Bond Questionnaire (caregivers) and MMSE and ADL (patients).

Result: The study indicated the greatest level of depression and caregiving-related burdens in the spouses group, and the least in the friends/others group. The most important predictor of the level of burden turned out to be the nature of the caregiver-patient relationship. The positive experiences with the AD patients from the pre-onset time are an important protective factor in all the groups of caregivers.

Conclusion: The fact that the group of spouses was found to be the most affected by the burden of care indicates the need to provide them with help. One of the most significant predictors of caregiving burnout in this group is a sense of loss and positive experiences. Therefore it seems reasonable to assume that refreshing and nurturing such memories could also enhance the caregiver's ability experiences and emotions predominate.