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LAY HELP FOR THE CAREGIVERS OF DEMENTED OUTPATIENTS: IMPACT ON HEALTH STATUS OF PATIENTS, CAREGIVERS AND LAY HELPERS

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International studies showed that caregiver interventions are efficacious especially when they provide the possibility to be free from caregiver role for some hours. Up to now there is no research available concerning the impact on the psychological and physical health of the involved persons.

In a program developed by the memory clinic of University of Goettingen, Germany, and a diaconic social service provider, 64 lay helpers were trained for their role in a 40-hours-course. After informed consent, at three times (T0, T1 (after 6 months), T2 (after 1 year), lay helpers, caregivers and the demented patients were interviewed and standard scales were used (SCL-90, BDI, MMSE, GDS, BEHAVE-AD, NOSGER, IADL, RuD, Adult Attachment Scale etc.).

31 demented patients were included, however from only 16 results at T2 could be obtained. Most patients were moderately to severely impaired. However, during the study, their mood, mobility and circadian stability improved. The situation of the caregivers remained stable, the lay helpers showed no "negative" trends except for the result that their attitude to ageing significantly deteriorated.

The data should be interpreted with caution because of the low number of persons included and the lack of a control group. In addition lay help is typically variable and other external factors might influence the results. However, because of the broad range of parameters investigated, interesting results are nevertheless worth discussion.