

Caregivers of Persons With Dementia Report Poorer Physical & Mental Health

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PURPOSE: The purpose of this study was to examine mental and physical health measures in a large cohort of individuals who are regular caregivers (CG) of persons with Alzheimer's Disease/Dementia (AD/D). The hypothesis was that the mental and physical health of individuals who are CG of persons with AD/D would be worse than individuals who do not provide regular care (NCG).

DESIGN: Quantitative, cross-sectional, U.S. Survey

METHOD: A 2019 data set including 1,012 caregivers to individuals with AD/D in the United States was obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. Raw data was obtained and analyzed using SPSS 27.0. Mental and physical health measures were adapted from the short-form 36 health survey, and included, 'During the past 4 weeks, have you had 14 or more days of poor mental health', 'During the past 4 weeks, have you had 14 or more days of poor physical health.'

RESULTS: CG were predominantly female (66.4%). The percentage of CG of AD/D that reported 14 or more days per month that their mental health was not good was 19.7% compared to NCG = 12.1%, Chi-Square Test = 7.1, $p < 0.001$, OR 1.8 (95% CI 1.5-2.1). The percentage that reported 14 or more days per month that their physical health was not good was 18.6% compared to NCG 10.7%, Chi-Square Test = 3.8, $p < 0.001$, OR 1.4 (95% CI 1.0 - 1.6).

CONCLUSIONS: CG of individuals with AD/D had significantly more days of poor mental and physical health compared to NCG.

IMPACT STATEMENT: This study points to the need for appropriate strategies to screen for and promote the health of CG, who are critical partners in optimizing care. This partnership relies on CG who are in good mental and physical health. This data demonstrates the need for OTs to consider the mental and physical health of CG when developing a plan of care for persons with AD/D. Future research should explore the role of OT in screening for and addressing the health needs of CG.

References

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