

Quality of life and emotional burden of primary caregivers: a case–control study of multiple sclerosis patients in Greece

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Abstract

Purpose

Our aim was to assess the perceived emotional burden and quality of life (QOL) in a sample of Greek primary caregivers of patients with multiple sclerosis (MS).

Methods

Twenty-two male and 13 female primary caregivers (mean age 47.3 ± 12.4 years), and an equal number of patients with MS, completed the Greek validated version of the hospital anxiety and depression scale (HADS) and the Greek validated version of EuroQOL (EQ-5D). Thirty-five age-, gender-, and education-matched healthy controls were used for comparison.

Results

Caregivers experienced higher degree of anxiety than depression. The mean score of the HADS-A subscale was 9.5 ± 4 (range 3–15), and the mean score of the HADS-D subscale was 7.1 ± 3.1 (range 2–14). The mean scores of caregivers on both HADS-A and HADS-D were significantly higher than the controls' ($P < 0.0001$). Twenty-two caregivers were diagnosed with manifesting anxiety, whereas 12 of them also presented depression. Highly educated caregivers were more prone to manifest increased levels of anxiety and depression. The increased psychological distress was further supported by the responses in the

anxiety/depression dimension on the EQ-5D: 27 reported a moderate level of anxiety/depression and three indicated an extreme degree. The caregivers reported a mean EQ-VAS value of 61.9 ± 13.8 (range 40–100), with 10 caregivers rating their health status a score of 50 or lower; the controls scored significantly higher (90.3 ± 7.1 ; $P < 0.0001$).

Conclusion

The sample of caregivers we studied was psychologically burdened to a significant degree, a fact that obviously deteriorates their QOL. Appropriate psychopharmacological interventions are warranted to reduce caregivers' burden.

Keywords

- Health-related quality of life
- Multiple sclerosis
- Caregivers
- Education