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# Relationship between distress and physical activity in informal carers of patients with COPD

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## Abstract

**Background:** Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) can lead to an increase in patient's dependence on the informal carer and consequently to higher levels of distress. In the general population, higher levels of physical activity (PA) have been found to contribute to lower levels of distress. However, this relationship has been scarcely studied in carers of patients with COPD.

**Aim:** This study aimed to explore the relationship between distress and PA in informal carers of patients with COPD and the influence of caregiving duration.

**Methods:** Forty-one carers ( $62.4 \pm 10.1$  years, 90.2% female; 41.5% caring for patients  $>40$ h/week; patients'  $FEV_1 = 43.7 \pm 19.7\%$  pred) completed the Portuguese tool to assess distress related to caregiving (Informal Caregiver Burden Assessment Questionnaire [QASCI]; higher score meaning higher distress; 7 subscales); the Habitual Physical Activity Questionnaire (HPAQ) to assess PA; and questions related to the caregiving duration (h/week, years). Pearson's correlations and linear regressions were used.

**Results:** There was a negative moderate correlation between the QASCI ( $30.3 \pm 20.7$ ) and the HPAQ ( $5.1 \pm 1.2$ ) ( $r = -.517$ ;  $p = .01$ ). Correlations were also found between PA and some of the QASCI subscales (emotional burden  $r = -.500$ ; implications for personal life  $r = -.652$ ; financial burden  $r = -.471$ ; perception of efficacy and control

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**Conclusions:** Higher PA levels may be related to decreased levels of distress in this population. Further research is needed.

[Mental health](#)   [COPD - management](#)   [Physical activity](#)

## Footnotes

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