

## SYMPTOM CORRELATES OF CAREGIVER BURDEN IN SPOUSES OF PERSONS WITH DEMENTIA

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Caregiver burden is a key predictor of institutionalization of persons with dementia. Using the Lenz et al. (1997), Theory of Unpleasant Symptoms as a guide, the purpose of this study was to determine whether pain, fatigue, or depressive symptoms are associated with caregiver burden among spouses of persons with dementia. A secondary analysis of an existing database of a cross-sectional, descriptive study of 83 spouses of persons with dementia was conducted. Spouses were predominately female (60%) and Caucasian (76%) with a mean age of 77 years. Symptom data were collected using items from the SF-36v2. Burden data was collected using the abridged Zarit Burden Interview. Data were analyzed using descriptive, correlational, and multiple regression statistical analyses. Spouse caregiver pain, fatigue, and depressive symptoms were significantly associated with caregiver burden ( $r = .25, .42, \text{ and } .68$  respectively,  $p < .05$ ). When the three symptoms were entered into the regression analysis, only depressive symptoms predicted caregiver burden ( $\beta = .61, p < .001$ ) accounting for 48% of the variance. Caregiver symptoms, particularly depressive symptoms, may contribute to greater burden for spouses caring for a person with dementia. Further research in this area may inform future symptom management interventions designed to reduce caregiver burden.

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