IMMEDIATE IMPACT OF CAREGIVING FOR PATIENTS WITH ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE AND DEMENTIA ON PSYCHOSOCIAL AND CLINICAL COMORBIDITIES IN BRAZIL

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OBJECTIVES: Patients with dementia due to Alzheimer’s disease (AD) are often cared for by family members who experience physical, psychological, social, and financial burdens associated with provision of care. This study quantifies the impact of caregiving in Brazil and helps identify characteristics associated with caregiving.

METHODS: Data were analyzed from the 2012 National Health and Wellness Survey (NHWS) in Brazil (n = 7,456), an Internet-based survey of adults (ages 18+), using stratified random sampling (by sex and age) to ensure demographic representation of the Brazilian adult population. Caregivers were compared with non-caregivers on select caregiver characteristics (e.g., gender, marital status, comorbidities, years diagnosed with epilepsy), quality of life (QoL) characteristics, health behaviors and characteristics, and Charlson comorbidity index (CCI) scores. Binary logistic regression models assessed comorbidities associated with caregiving, adjusting for potential confounders (CCI, age, gender, education, income, employment status, and number of children). Results of multi-factorial analyses were presented as odds ratios (OR). Levels of significance were p < 0.015

RESULTS: Caregiving was associated with significantly increased risk of depressive symptoms (OR = 1.06, 95% CI: [1.01, 1.1]), anxiety (OR = 1.14, 95% CI: [1.01, 1.19]), insomnia (OR = 1.64), hypertension (OR = 1.584), pain (OR = 1.704), and diabetes (OR = 2.103), all p < 0.15. The study suggests that caregivers are at greater risk of developing additional health problems compared with non-caregivers. This is important for policy makers and health care providers to develop appropriate interventions for caregivers and people with dementia.

CONCLUSIONS: Further research is needed to understand the burden associated with providing care for dementia patients and to identify potential interventions that can help caregivers cope with the demands of caregiving.