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## EDITORIAL

# Burden of caregivers of individuals with stroke



Stroke is one of the most prevalent conditions that can lead to chronic disability [1]. While much research focus has been on restoring the functional ability of individuals who have survived a stroke episode, the well-being and quality of life of their caregivers have received less attention. The problem of burden among caregivers of stroke patients should not be overlooked. Recently, Denno et al [2] have demonstrated in a sample of caregivers of stroke patients with spasticity that there was an increased risk of experiencing anxiety and depression as the level of burden increased. In this issue of *the Hong Kong Physiotherapy Journal*, Ogunlana et al [3] attempted to examine the burden and quality of life among caregivers of patients after stroke. Based on a sample of 130 participants, it was shown that the average level of caregiver burden was moderate and that a higher level of caregiver strain was associated with lower quality of life. In addition, lower functional level of the stroke survivors and older age of the caregivers were found to be significantly correlated with lower quality of life and higher level of burden among the caregivers. There is thus a need to search for effective strategies to prevent or alleviate the burden of caregivers of stroke survivors. A recent multicenter trial involving more than 900 patients after stroke has investigated the effects of a structured training programme for caregivers of inpatients after stroke (the London Stroke Carers Training Course) on various outcomes for the patients with stroke and their caregivers [4]. Surprisingly, their results revealed no significant treatment effect on the level of caregiver burden compared with usual care. Perhaps the optimal time to implement this structured caregiver training

programme might not be during the immediate period following a stroke episode. Another potential explanation of their nonsignificant results might be that the structured programme may be in fact ineffective and require modifications to bring about favourable outcomes. Undoubtedly, more research is required in this important area.

## References

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