There are over 5 million persons diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in the United States. An early symptom of this slowly progressive disease is characterized by short-term memory loss. As Alzheimer's disease progresses, there is loss of cognitive function, independence, often the development of psychotic disorders, and behavioral disorders. Persons diagnosed with the disease, their families and friends are all impacted on varied levels. As deterioration continues, persons diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease often rely upon family members to help them with their daily functioning. The complexities of this disease expose these family caregivers to chronic stressors that may impact them emotionally, physically, financially, and spiritually. The amalgamation of these stressors is the caregiver burden. As the disease process continues, more time spent providing care is required resulting in progressively increased burden.

A systematic review of the literature was completed using PRISMA guidelines. CINAHL, PubMed, PsychINFO, and SCOPUS database were searched using the key terms of “Caregiver Burden” AND “Alzheimer’s” AND “Adult-child Caregiver.” Additional search factors included articles written in English and that were published between 2008 and 2019. The research question being asked in this review is “What differences in burden exist between adult-children and spouses who provide caregiving to a family member with Alzheimer’s disease and are there appropriate interventions that alleviate this burden while strengthening the caregiver’s ability to cope and extend their caregiving abilities?”

The majority of Alzheimer’s related care is provided by adult-children; however, most research studies focus on spouses. Studies that have included both spouses and children generally do not distinguish findings between these two groups. Studies that do differentiate between family relationship to the Alzheimer’s patient identify that differences exist relative to the types and extent of burden experienced. Stigma related to the disease process is shown to increase burden. Female caregivers report increased rates of depressive symptoms. Cohabitation increases burden. Interventions aimed at burden-reduction have been limited to date and rely upon resources generally unavailable to rural populations.

Title:
Caregiver Burden Among Adult-Child Caregivers of Persons With Alzheimer’s Disease: A Systematic Review

Keywords:
Adult-Child Caregiver, Alzheimer's disease and Caregiver Burden

References:
Cary, M. S., Rubright, J. D., Grill, J. D., & Karlawish, J. (2015). Why are spousal caregivers more prevalent than non-spousal caregivers as study partners in AD dementia clinical trials? Alzheimer’s Disease and Associated Disorders, 29, 70-74. doi: 10.1097/WAD.0000000000000047

Abstract Summary:
Studies examining the difference of family care-giving with respect to the adult-child versus the spouse with Alzheimer’s disease reveal that burden is multifaceted and that spouses and adult-children are impacted by burden differently. Interventions aimed at reducing the burden of adult-child caregivers could benefit a significant population of caregivers.
Content Outline:

Introduction:

1. The prevalence of Alzheimer’s Disease is increasing. Most care-giving is provided by unpaid family members.
2. Limited effective burden reduction resources for caregivers have been identified.

Key Points:

1. Burden is multi-faceted.
   1. Impacts individuals on physical, emotional, financial, and spiritual level.
   2. Burden experienced is a dynamic process as disease progresses.
2. More children provide care than do spouses; however, research focuses more on spouses.
   1. Adult-child caregivers suffer more burden than do spouse caregivers.
   2. Caregiver quality of life impacts care delivery.
3. Interventions aimed at reducing burden are limited.
   1. Respite, in-home care and adult day care are shown to reduce burden.

Conclusions:

1. Adult-child caregivers comprise a significant proportion of people caring for persons with Alzheimer’s disease.
2. Further study is needed on how to best deliver burden-reducing interventions.

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