

## **CAREGIVERS STRESS SYNDROME: AN UNDER DIAGNOSED CONDITION**

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### **Abstract**

In this review article author explained the caregivers stress syndrome and coping mechanism. Caregivers stress is typically chronic and a challenging task. However, it is often recognized as a problem when they exhibit stress symptoms such as irritability, anxiety, fatigue, disturbed sleep, various medical health problems, depression, neglected personal care and responsibilities, exhaustive etc. The caregivers also may show their stress as drinking alcohol and smoking. There is need to aware to cope-up with stress among caregivers through identification of under diagnosed conditions or to prevent unwanted consequences. The author pointed out positive aspects of care giving while taking care of their ill relatives, the positive aspects were associated with better quality of life as steps to deal with caregiver stress and burnout.

**Keywords:** caregiver, stress syndrome, burnout, cope-up.

### **INTRODUCTION**

As a new caregiver one can feel, perceive but cannot define stress. In fact, even may not be able to name it. This unidentifiable condition is termed as Caregiver Stress Syndrome.<sup>2</sup>

Providing care to a person may be considered as humanity, in other hand it is the toughest job which includes physical, psychological, social and economical strain. Former First Lady Rosalynn Carter has once stated there are only four kinds of people in the world: those who have been caregivers, those who are currently caregivers those who will be caregivers, and those who will need caregivers.<sup>8</sup>

Geriatric psychiatrist Ken Robbins of the University of Wisconsin-Madison has stated in one of his study that "Caregivers tend to be a special personality type: big-hearted, sensitive, responsible, well-intentioned people who are motivated by and take a deep satisfaction in doing right by their loved one, But that's often to the exclusion of taking care of themselves."<sup>7</sup>

### **Classification:**

Care givers can be of mainly two types-

- ❖ Formal caregivers: It includes the professionals who are involved in care giving like nurses, doctors, house maids etc.
- ❖ Informal care givers: They are those who are related with the patient in one or the other manners.

For example:

- Adult child caring for an elderly parent.
- People caring for grandparents, siblings, aunts, and uncles
- Spouses caring for elderly husbands or wives
- Parents caring for severely disabled adult children
- People caring for friends and neighbors

### **Incidence :**

Out of the informal caregiver sixty-one percent of caregivers are women. Most caregivers are middle-aged. About thirteen percent of caregivers are aged 65 years and older. Fifty-nine percent of informal caregivers have jobs in addition to caring for

another person. Because of time spent care giving, more than half of employed women caregivers have made changes at work, such as going in late, leaving early, or working fewer hours.<sup>8</sup>

### **Challenges of being care giver:**

Major challenges of being care taker are it compounds on other duties and responsibilities, which can create a sense of feeling burdened or overwhelmed

Sense of sadness that one's loved one is no longer independent or may be approaching death.

The physical demands of care giving, and vulnerabilities of older caregivers may compromise their physiological function and increase the risk for health problems, like high blood pressure, diabetes, and a compromised immune system.

If the stress of care giving is left unchecked, it can take a toll on health, relationships, and state of mind—eventually leading to burnout

Researchers also suggested that elderly caregivers have a 63% higher risk of mortality than non caregivers in the same age group. The physical symptoms of caregiver stress are the result of a prolonged and elevated level of stress hormones circulating in the body. Exhausted caregiver stress hormone levels are like those who are suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder. As a group, caregivers report more anxiety, depression, and increased use of alcohol or other drugs.

### **Identification criteria for care givers stress syndrome**

- ❖ **Stress** : Stress related to care can be presented as follows
  - Anxiety and irritability
  - Fatigue
  - Disturbed Sleep
  - Over reactivity
  - Emerging various health problems like high blood presser, diabetes, gastritis, etc.
  - In attentiveness
  - Habitual distrubances like drinking, alcohol and smoking
  - Reducing leisure

- Neglecting duties along with self
- depression
- ❖ **Burnout** : It can be identified by the following symptoms.
  - Feeling exhausted
  - Neglecting self due to over burdened
  - Less satisfaction in work
  - Troubled relaxing
  - Impatient with the person for whom care is given
  - Feeling of hopeless and helpless

### **Steps to deal with caregiver's stress & burnout:**

- ❖ **Asking for the help:-** Taking all the responsibility for care giving without break is a sure way for the burnout. Therefore it is important to :
  - **Speak up** the feelings as others cannot feel the same.
  - **Spread responsibility** among the family members and divide the work.
  - **Set up a regular check in** by any friend or relative .
  - **Say ' Yes' for assistance** and let the other people support during need.
  - Be willing to relinquish
- ❖ **Taking break:-** As a busy caregiver some leisure are necessary to perform energetic care giving. Therefore it is necessary for:
  - Distressing between burden helps for being productive.
  - Set aside a minimum of 30 minutes every day for self.
  - Find ways to pamper .
  - Laugh (use of laughter therapy).
  - Take outing with friends and share the feelings.
- ❖ **Practicing to accept:** - Try to avoid the emotional trap of feeling sorry or searching for someone to blame. Focus on accepting the situation and looking for ways to overcome such as:
  - Focus on things which can be controlled

- Find the silver lining
- Share feelings with others
- Avoid tunnel vision
- ❖ **Taking care of own self:-** It is essential for a care giver to find time for self care . It is therefore requires
  - Regular visit to the physician
  - Exercise
  - Meditation
  - Proper diet
  - Adequate sleep
- ❖ **Join a support group:-**
  - The support groups not only help to overcome the stress but also initiate helping others. Therefore identifying and utilization of support group for example neighbour, friend and other social members can support.

### **Conclusion:**

The demands of care giving can be overwhelming, especially if there is little control over the situation or over head. Caregiver's stress can be particularly damaging, since it is a chronic, long-term challenge. It can be particularly disheartening when there's no hope that the person you are caring for will get better. Without adequate help and support, the stress of care giving can give rise to a wide range of physical and emotional problems, starting from heart disease to depression. This in turn affects the ability to provide care. The important point is that caregivers also need care among the care givers. Thus there is need to consider the care givers as human and taking care

of self will not change the situation but it can lighten the burden of unwanted consequences and increase satisfaction care of the patient.

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