**Perceived Physical Health in Family Members of People with Alzheimer’s Disease**

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**BACKGROUND**

- Family members of people with AD and other dementias are at risk for increased morbidity and mortality.
- There is evidence that many remain hardy in the midst of caring for their loved ones.

**AIMS**

The aims of this study were:
1. To identify risk factors for increased morbidity and mortality.
2. To identify protective factors for better perceived physical health among family members of people with dementia.

**METHODS**

- **Participants:** Prospectively collected longitudinal data were obtained from the Baylor College of Medicine ADMDC, Houston, TX (n=1762).
- **Inclusion Criteria:**
  - Caring for an individual who met NINCDS-ADRA criteria for probable AD with no confounding secondary diagnosis
  - Willingness to complete a brief self-report questionnaire during the care receiver’s annual clinic appointment
- **Measures:**
  - Survey with single item Likert scale for each variable of interest; the NPIQ; and the Katz ADL/IADL
- **Analysis:**
  - Descriptive statistics and Pearson’s product-moment correlations

**FINDINGS**

- **Perceived Physical Health at Time of Clinic Visit**
  - Almost always: 51.6%
  - Almost always: 29%
  - Fair: 2.7%
  - Poor: 17.4%

- **Life Satisfaction**
  - Never or almost never: 1%
  - Rarely: 4%
  - Some of the time: 33%
  - Almost always: 52%

- **Degree of Stress**
  - Extremely: 1%
  - A little bit: 26%
  - Almost always: 1%
  - Never or almost never: 2.7%

- **Importance of Faith or Spirituality**
  - Extremely: 47%
  - A little bit: 12%
  - Not at all: 4%

**STRENGTHS & LIMITATIONS OF STUDY**

- Factors negatively impacting perceived physical health among family members of people with AD:
  - Functional status of person with AD (r=-.081; p<.001)
  - Neuropsychiatric symptoms present in person with AD (r=-.142; p<.01)
  - Perceived degree of stress in family member of person with AD (r=-.146; p<.001)
- Factors positively impacting perceived physical health among family members:
  - Perceived level of financial stability (r=.209; p<.01)
  - Perceived degree of reward in caregiving role (r=.097; p<.01)
  - Overall life satisfaction (r=.254; p<.001)

**CONCLUSIONS**

- Family members of people with AD typically perceive their physical health to be good to excellent.
- Perceived physical health remains relatively stable from visit to visit for the majority of family members of people with AD.
- A high degree of life satisfaction can occur in the context of significant stress.
- Some family members are at risk of poor perceived physical health status.
- Most psychosocial randomized clinical trials have targeted risk factors.
- Fewer psychosocial randomized clinical trials have targeted protective factors.
- There is a need for further development of strengths-based psychosocial clinic interventions aimed at increasing protective factors.

**FINDINGS CONTINUED**

- The majority of family members reported that their perceived physical health was “about the same” as compared to one year ago (81.6%).
- 15.7% reported that their perceived physical health status was “worse” as compared to one year ago.
- 2.7% reported it was better than a year ago.