Age and quality of life of family caregivers of individuals with dementia living at home: Systematic literature review

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Objectives: This review explored the association of age and QoL of family caregivers of people with dementia in observational studies published in English language to December 2013.

Methods: Studies addressing the quality of life (QoL) of older (≥65) family caregivers of people with dementia living at home and those correlating family caregivers’ age with QoL outcomes were included. Search in Medline-OVID, Embase-OVID, PsycINFO-OVID and CINAHL, Google Scholar, SIGLE, as well as hand searching and devising the references of the selected articles were performed. Publications were peer reviewed had their quality assessed, with conflicts resolved by discussion or by a third reviewer.

Results: From 1270 documents, 81 assessed the QoL of family caregivers of people with dementia being cared at home, but only 12 correlated QoL with age (n=8) or were about older caregivers (n=4). Eleven were cross sectional studies, one prospective cohort, all conducted in developed countries, with small samples and weak quality. The mean age of the carers were high (55.2-76.0), women and spouses were the main providers of care and the co-residents were significantly older than who did not live in the same house. Advanced age was associated with low levels of QoL in ten of the twelve studies. Levels of QoL were below the norm population and older carers were subjected to decreased mental and physical health components of QoL in baseline and 2 years prospective evaluation when they continued providing care.

Conclusion: Even though lower levels of QoL were found in almost all studies, little attention has been paid to the QoL of older carers or the association of age in the caregiving process in the literature, which may compromise the care or support provided to these people. The high mean age called the attention to the possible increasing number of older carers in all the general samples, as also to the possibility of many old old people caring for the family member with dementia.

Biography
Deborah C Oliveira graduated in 2009 with Bachelor and Teaching degrees in Nursing at the University of Campinas (Brazil). She then completed a MsC in Health Studies with anticipated support for care of community-dwelling older adults in a multicentre epidemiological study (FIBRA) in Brazil. She is currently in her second year’s PhD research at the University of Nottingham (United Kingdom) focused on the quality of life of older family carers of people with dementia. She has experience with research in quality of life, dementia, family carers, older adults and social support.

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