Prevalence of Depression among Primary Caregivers of Patients with Cerebral Palsy in a Tertiary Pediatric Hospital

BY: CHANDICE HAZELINE N. CUA, M.D.
National Children's Hospital

Introduction

Cerebral Palsy refers to a group of movement disorder and posture which causes activity limitations. Children with Cerebral Palsy have major limitations in several tasks of daily living such as feeding, dressing, bathing, and mobility. Thus, children with cerebral palsy are more dependent on others to do their daily activity. They also require long-term care as compared to a normal child.

According to Soliman et al. (2019) the burden of caring for a child with cerebral palsy affects parents' physical health and social well-being, especially to mothers. They may experience greater stress and depression as compared to mothers with healthy children.

Worldwide, the prevalence of depression among mothers of children with cerebral palsy was estimated to range from 6% to 40.5%.

Methodology

Objective: To determine the prevalence of depression among primary caregivers of patients with cerebral palsy in a Tertiary Hospital. To determine the demographic profile of the primary caregivers of patients with cerebral palsy as to:

1. Age
2. Sex
3. Civil status
4. Number of children
5. Relationship to cerebral palsy patient

Design: Cross sectional descriptive study with non-probability judgmental sampling design wherein the study subjects were chosen purposively

Participants and settings: Sixty-eight primary caregivers of patients with cerebral palsy were included in this study who sought consult at National Children's Hospital Neurology OPD, Rehabilitation OPD, General OPD and at the wards from January 2021 to October 2021.

Outcome Measure: This study utilized the Patient Health Questionnaire 9 (PHQ-9). It is a multipurpose instrument used for screening, diagnosing, monitoring and measuring the severity of depression.

Results

The age range of these primary caregivers were from 21 to 61 years old with a mean age of 35.8 and a standard deviation of +/-10.59. Majority (94.1%, n=64) were female while 4 (5.9%) were male.

More than half (51.5%, n=35) were single, 42.6% (n=29) were married, 2.9% (n=2) each were both widowed and separated. As for the cerebral palsy patient, most of them have siblings 77.9% (n=53), while 15 (22.1%) were an only child.

Out of the 68 primary caregivers, majority were mothers (83.8%, n=57) followed by grandmothers (8.8%, n=6), fathers (2.9%, n=2), sister (1.5%, n=1), uncle (1.5%, n=1), and neighbor (1.5%, n=1).

Out of the 68 primary caregivers, 63.2% (n=43) were depressed while 36.8% (n=25) had no depression.

Of the 43 primary caregivers with depression, most only had mild severity 48.8% (n=21) followed by moderate 32.6% (n=14), moderately severe 16.2% (n=7) and severe 2.3% (n=1).

Conclusion and Recommendation

In this study, it was found out that there is a prevalence of depression among primary caregivers of patients with cerebral palsy. Majority of these primary caregivers were mothers who are mainly responsible for taking care of these patients. This study showed that majority only had mild depression. Since patients with cerebral palsy usually depend on others to fully function and they require long term care, early recognition and screening of depression may be beneficial for both the patients and the primary caregivers. By optimizing the mental health of these primary caregivers, they can provide proper care and support to these cerebral palsy patients.

For future researches, the researcher recommends additional structured interviews aside from the PHQ 9 questionnaire and more follow up sessions to these primary caregivers in assessing their levels of depression. Other tools or questionnaire to assess depression could also be used. Future researches could also tackle other mental health issues.

References

- American Psychiatric Association. (2013). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed.)
- Begum R, & Desai O. (2010). A comparative study to evaluate psychological status of mothers of children with cerebral palsy and mothers of normal children. *Indian journal of occupational therapy*, 42(2), 3-9.
- Kliegman, R., Stanton, B., St. Geme, J. W., Schor, N. F., & Behrman, R. E. (2016). *Nelson textbook of pediatrics* (Edition 20). Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier.
- Kroenke, K., Spitzer, R. L., & Williams, J. B. W. (2001). The PHQ-9. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, *16*(9), 606–613. https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1525-1497.2001.016009606.x
- Soliman, R. H., Altwairqi, R. G., Alshamrani, N. A., Al-Zahrani, A. A., Al-Towairqi, R. M., & Al-Habashi, A. H. (2019a). Relationship between quality of life of children with cerebral palsy and their mothers' depression and anxiety. *Saudi Journal for Health Sciences*, *8*(1), 1. https://doi.org/10.4103/sjhs.sjhs_130_18