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Relationship between gender and stress and anxiety experienced by caregivers of lung transplant recipients

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Introduction: The literature has documented the stressful nature of care giving. It is a well-known fact that caregiver health affects patient health and vice versa. Prior studies have reported that female caregivers in other populations are more stressed and anxious than their male counterparts. Few of these studies have assessed gender differences in transplant caregivers and most have addressed issues that occur pre-transplant. The purpose of this study was to assess the level of stress and anxiety by gender and over time in a population of post-lung transplant caregivers.

Methods: The study was a single group longitudinal design. 83 caregivers (59 females, 24 males) of lung transplant recipients located at a large tertiary health care center in southwestern Pennsylvania completed the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) the State Anxiety Scale (SAS) and the Trait Anxiety Scale (TAS) a three points during and after the hospitalization of their significant other (baseline, 4 weeks, 8 weeks). Eligibility criteria included; Primary caregiver for a lung transplant recipient, 30-80 years of age and able to read, write and speak English.

Results: Mean age for females was 54.9 years; for males 55.9 (range 30-75). Most sample members were white (91%) spouses (72%). All were educated at least at the high school level. All subjects had scores for the PSS, SAS and TAS that were above the normed group scores for their age group (ages 50-69). For the PSS, normed means for males is 12.1; for females it is 13.7. For the State Anxiety Scale (SAS), normed means for males is 34.51 and 32.20 for females. The Trait Anxiety Scale (TAS) normed mean for males and females is 33.86 and 31.79 respectively. There were decreased scores noted in both sexes at 4 and 8 weeks on the PSS but this was not found to be statistically significant. Data were analyzed using an independent sample t test.

Conclusions: Preliminary findings show that all subjects had PSS, SAS and TAS scores above the normed means at all three data collection points indicating that this sample is more anxious and stressed than the general population. To our knowledge, this was the first study that assessed stress and anxiety by gender in post-lung transplant caregivers.

Biography

Alice Jane Haines has obtained her BSN from West Virginia Wesleyan College and her Master of Science in Nursing Education and Doctor of Nursing Practice from the University of Pittsburgh. She is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Acute and Tertiary Care at the University of Pittsburgh. She has worked for 33 years in Nursing and has 25 years of Nursing Education experience. She has also worked as a Staff Nurse for more than 5 years on a Lung Transplant Step-down Unit. Caring for Lung Transplant recipients and their caregivers is truly her passion.

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