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Longitudinal study on self-perceived burden of patients with stroke

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Background & Aim: The self-perceived burden plays an important role in the rehabilitation of stroke survivors. Stroke patients often experience a self-perceived burden that affects their quality of life. However, little is known about the self-perceived burden at different time after stroke. The aim of this study was to evaluate dynamically the level of self-perceived burden of patients at different time after stroke and to explore characteristics of patients and caregivers associated with that burden.

Method: A longitudinal descriptive and correlational study was conducted with a sample of 363 consecutive hospitalized acute stroke patients recruited from the Neurology Department of three general hospitals of China. The self-perceived burden was measured using Chinese versions of the Self-Perceived Burden Scale (SPBS) in the acute phase of stroke and at the end of 1st and 3rd month after stroke.

Result: There was a statistically significant difference in the self-perceived burden and its all dimensions among patients in the acute phase of stroke (30.76 ± 7.04), the 1st month (26.93 ± 6.17) and 3rd month (25.15 ± 6.57) after stroke. Compared with the score in the acute phase, the score of self-perceived burden in the 1st and 3rd month after stroke reduced 3.84 (95% confidence interval: 3.44-4.24) and 5.61 (95% confidence interval: 5.09-6.13), respectively ($P < 0.05$). The score of self-perceived burden in the 3rd month after stroke decreased 1.77 (95% confidence interval: 1.50-2.04) from that of the 1st month after stroke ($P < 0.05$). The main influencing factors of self-perceived burden of patients with stroke were patients' age, self-assessment level of economic pressure, concomitant diseases, self-care level and caregivers' health status, care time and care ability.

Conclusion: Patients experienced moderately high self-perceived burden in the acute phase of stroke. In the 1st and 3rd month after stroke, the level was changed to a mild level. As time goes on, the total self-perceived burden and the burden of physical and emotional dimensions are on a declining trend among stroke patients. Better understanding of self-perceived burden and its associated characteristics may help nurses identify patients at highest risk who may benefit from targeted interventions from hospital to community and family.

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