

## Caregiver- Is There A Hidden Patient?

*In our routine practice it is not a uncommon site to attend to the patients attendants' musculoskeletal and psychological problems. The patients may be an in-patient or out-patient, attending hospital for rehabilitation or any other chronic diseases like Coronary Artery Disease, cancer, depression, child hood disabling conditions etc. What we deal with is only the tip of the iceberg but deep down there lies the whole problem which as yet has not achieved much attention in the routine health care. Adding to the above issue is the fact of increased guilt and anger in the caregiver if the cared patient is not improving and the physician scolds the caregivers. The issue becomes more amplified if the caregiver is a family member, be it a parent, child or spouse although the professional caregivers like doctors, nurses, attendants and other caregivers are not immune from it. The psychological and physical impact of care-giving on caregivers' health has now been established and there are many support groups now formed on the internet and otherwise. This is even more in case of caring for person with disability with higher care needs, behavioral problems and depression, financial stress, lower levels of social support and disturbed family functioning. Care-giving can also have its positive effects and can give better satisfaction and feeling of well being to some. May be the coping mechanisms and the basic psychological profile of the caregivers can make some difference. The role of caregivers in medical practice is complex and extended and they may feel high level of commitment or total detachment but doing it out of expected social norms. The latter may be hidden and may result in cared or caregivers deterioration in physical and mental health. Many caregivers' health risk assessment tools have been developed to assess the impact of care-giving and are undergoing refinement so as to better predict the care-giving burden and its impact and to take the specific measures to prevent the deterioration in patient as well as caregivers health. The family caregivers at times have to leave their jobs or take extra leaves to cope up hence adding to the stress. The coping mechanisms , social support , psychological adjustment , attention to stressors like sleep disturbance, musculoskeletal problems and regular exercise and respite activities can help a caregiver to a great extent. The Physiatrist has a special role to play in this complex relationship and has to ensure due care for the caregiver also. The physical problems like chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, back pain, neck pain etc and psychological problems such as sleep disturbance,depression, somatization etc. may be co-existent in the same patient. The understanding of various physical, emotional, social, psychological, vocational issues and appropriate counseling and support in these areas can contribute significantly to improvement in the quality of life of both patients and the caregivers.*

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