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Perspectives

The impact of caring for family members with mental illnesses on the caregiver: a scoping review

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Summary

A large number of multidisciplinary, qualitative and quantitative research suggests that providing care for family members with mental health illnesses can have both positive and negative effects on the carers' wellbeing. However, to date a comprehensive overview and synthesis of literature that compares and contrasts positive and negative effects of family-caregiving on the carer is missing. To address this gap, this scoping review examines the effects of family-caregiving on carers' wellbeing. A Boolean search generated a total of 92 relevant articles that were included in the analysis. The results suggest that, to understand the effects of family-caregiving on the carer's mental and physical wellbeing, it is necessary to take a combination of situational and sociodemographic characteristics into consideration. Elderly, female, spousal-carers and primary-carers may be a group that is at risk of suffering from a lack of positive mental and physical wellbeing as a result of caring. However, the negative effects of caregiving can be balanced by extraversion, social support and religious or spiritual beliefs. Therefore, future interventions that aim to promote family caregivers' wellbeing may need to take personality, particular circumstances as well as cultural and personal beliefs into consideration.

Key words: family caregiving, scoping review, mental health, family carers

INTRODUCTION

According to recent studies, an increasing number of people experience mental health disorders (Fernando, 2014; Bruffaerts *et al.*, 2015; Polanczyk *et al.*, 2015; Hanna *et al.*, 2018). Due to a global deinstitutionalization of the treatment of mental illnesses, only a low proportion of those suffering from mental illnesses are admitted to hospitals (WHO, 2017). Of those who are hospitalized,

~30–50% experience a relapse of symptoms within the first 6 months and 50–70% in the first 5 years after being discharged (Chang and Chou, 2015; Ali *et al.*, 2017; Sadock *et al.*, 2017). Comorbidity with other mental illness, non-adherence to medication, shorter duration on treatment and experiencing stressful life events as well as high disability score, and a single admission history are