

Anxiety of Caregivers in Telerehabilitation Sessions During Covid 19

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Pandemics affect people in a defeatist manner and become stressful for people with relatives which need specific forms of care and attention. The study was conducted to find out if anxiety prevails among caretakers during the Covid-19 Pandemic as according to the literature review caregivers experience burden and fears related to their care-recipients and telerehabilitation.

Material and Methods: The study used cross sectional survey and quantitative research. 50 care-givers participated in the research where they filled online questionnaires inspired and derived from care-giver burden scale and beck anxiety inventory. Anxiety was clearly evident as most of the care-givers agreed to have feelings of nervousness 19 (38%), feeling anxious 18 (36%), feeling distressed 22 (44%), complaints about emotional burden 23 (43%) and 23 (46%) constant immersion in duties towards care-recipients.

Results: SPSS tables depict the analyzed results and their interpretation. The results show 36% of the care-givers agreed that they face anxiety when a situation gets out of control, 44% were distressed about not getting enough help from healthcare team and other family and friends, 55% are apprehensive about their present condition and 46% are emotionally challenged and constantly immersed in duties owing to their family members.

Conclusions: Anxiety and depression as a result of caregiving burden is common among care-givers and needs to be addressed as soon as possible. This makes it essential that health professionals pay heed and attention to develop interventions for care-givers and provide them with pertinent knowledge.

Keywords: anxiety, care burden, caregiver, covid 19, pandemic, telerehabilitation

INTRODUCTION

An extensive occurrence of an infectious disease of cases with unexplained, bronchitis, tuberculosis and mainly pneumonia was detected in Wuhan, the huge metropolitan area in China's province Hubei with a population of 11 million people, on December 31, 2019. The Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention and local CDCs arranged an investigation program which helped to identify the fact that the pneumonia was spawned by a unfamiliar virus that belongs to the coronavirus family. This novel virus afterwards was recognized as covid 19, the corona virus disease 2019 seeded by the virus SARS-CoV-2. Previous family related viruses SARS-COV and MERS-COV beginning in China and Saudi Arabia were also blameworthy to cause a wide-reaching epidemic but this new virus of the family seems to be more life threatening and spreads rapidly because it ought to be communicable. The virus has originated through natural processes, and are positive-stranded RNA viruses that are sensitive to ultraviolet rays and heat.^(1, 2) Therapists and rehabilitation team comprises speech therapists, occupational therapist's clinical psychologists, special educationists, welfare workers and orthotists. These professionals provide therapy via educating and providing awareness to the client's family members and counselling them together with exercise and vital compensatory techniques that help the disabled individual to make their occupational and daily life better. There are numerous ways through which health professionals and rehabilitation team members can help individuals and their family members who are going through the covid-19 pandemic, which also illustrates how essential these professionals are in the prognosis of even covid-19 patients and their relatives. According to WHO Covid-19 is now a pandemic affecting many countries globally. The disease can

spread through aerosol and contact transmission it's suspected to take place through respiratory droplets from coughing, sneezing as well as speaking. These droplets are heavy and can settle on objects and surfaces around people which means a person touching these objects and surfaces prior to

touching their eyes, nose and mouth are prone to catch the virus too. Close contact and exposure between individuals is essential to its spread. The most common symptoms are dry cough, fever and fatigue.⁽³⁾ Coming towards Pakistan the NIH has issued several warnings to spread the awareness of the deadly virus and the country's key medical associations have also warned the government of serious consequences if an absolute lockdown is not forced. Pakistan is among the countries that are least prepared to deal with the consequences the virus can present. World's most advanced economies are suffering under the strain of the coronavirus pandemic and Pakistan is far more a poor nation that is unable to cater to the pandemic owing to resource and financial problems that makes it very hard for us to treat and diagnose the virus appropriately.⁽⁴⁾ The government of Pakistan like many other countries has also placed emergency protocols and lockdowns across the country. The purpose of the lockdown is to hinder and suppress the progress of the virus as it spreads and develops rapidly due to human contact. Although life under lockdown brings a lot challenges, people need to weigh the negative and positive outcomes of the lockdown and realise that how essential it is to stay quarantine and practice social distancing if one wants things to get better and not burden and encumber the already feeble health system of Pakistan.⁽⁵⁾ Virtual communication can always help people feel less lonely and isolated, because you can see and hear one another. Furthermore, it is one the best ways to communicate in situations like covid-19 and help us to make our lives more productive and conventional keeping us calm and collected. Anxieties regarding the disorder that prevail on the caretaker due to their family member in this pandemic situation have been looked upon. The caretakers are informal and do not include nurses or other professionals. Informal caretakers can be defined as individuals that provide assistance in activities of daily life without any payment.⁽⁶⁾ Informal caregivers or family caretakers are at higher risk of developing mental health issues and are more prone to experience depression⁽⁷⁾. Burden in the caregivers is a

characteristic that paves way for depression and anxiety. Burden in caregivers of communication disorders is very high⁽⁸⁾

SUBJECTS AND METHODS

This is a cross-sectional survey study and quantitative research. Convenience sampling was used to conduct this study. The questionnaire was filled by care-givers whose patients were of communication disorders through an online medium. The care-givers included in the research are informal, caregivers were only of patients with communication disorders who were attending online sessions. Duration of the study was for 4 months after the acceptance of synopsis. The sample size of the study was 50 participants. Sample was taken from care-givers of patients of communication disorders via an online questionnaire. A questionnaire derived from beck anxiety inventory and caregivers Burden Scale was developed and used to assess the anxiety among caregivers. No formal care-givers like nurses or any sort of professional staff has participated in the research. The tool used in order to assess the anxiety in care-givers was a questionnaire developed and derived from caregiver burden scale and beck anxiety inventory. The Questionnaire consisted of 26 questions that aimed to assess demographics of the care-giver and questions that could help in depicting the anxiety, burden and problems the care-givers have to face in the Covid-19 Pandemic and during telerehabilitation. The questionnaire also aimed to find out the problems related to attending the current online session. The questionnaire was generated online and was filled by the caregivers of clients that were attending the online sessions. An online questionnaire derived through beck anxiety inventory and caregiver burden scale has been used to collect data. Data was collected from informal caregivers of communication disorders who are taking online sessions during this pandemic situation. Data is collected and analysed by utilising the SPSS version 25 and endnote x7 is used for the references.

RESULTS

Table 1:

DEMOGRAPHICS	
Male respondents	44%
Female respondents	56%
Age Range of respondent's	21-48

Table 2:

Sr no.	Prime Questions	Outcomes
1	Do you feel anxious when you are not able to control situations at times?	18 (36 %) of the caregivers agree
2	Do you distress over the fact that you don't have enough support from family, friends and health-care team?	22 (44%) care-givers agreed
3	Do you feel your life is at peace these days or is worse than before?	18 (36%) of the care-givers agree
4	Are you apprehensive about your present condition and life in quarantine?	25 (50%) Of the care-givers agree
5	Have the online sessions influenced behavioral issues in the family member?	17 (34%) of the care-givers slightly agree
6	Do you feel uneasy that you need more computer literacy and education for operating the technology used during online sessions?	22 (44%) of the care-givers agreed
7	Do you feel emotionally challenged to spend all your time with your family members and none on yourself or other family and friends?	23 (46%) of the care-givers agree
8	Do you constantly think about your issues and feel immersed in your duties towards the care receiver?	23 (46%) of the care-givers agree

DISCUSSION

Common subjects directed in the literature related to why stress and anxiety prevail among informal care-takers of communication

disorders during covid-19 incorporate: social isolation, lack of educational training, stress, and anxiety because of the pandemic and disparate routines. This study further adds to these issues with some different and unexpected findings. 38% of the caregivers according to the study agree that they feel nervous concentrating and focusing on their personal life and activities. In a study by ⁽¹⁸⁾, they found that most caregivers reported about how their quality of life was strongly affected by the care-recipient that led to depression and anxiety. Another 46% of the care-givers also agree that they constantly think and feel immersed in their duties towards the care-recipient. In a study by ⁽¹⁹⁾ they found that 11% to 42% of care-givers exhibited signs of depression and how they feel helpless in caring for their relatives at times. Most of the care-givers agree that they feel anxious when they aren't able to control situations at times as such in the pandemic where everything seems more unpredictable and uncertain as ever. Another very important point discovered in the study was how there is more need of computer literacy and education for operating the technology used during online sessions among the Pakistani population. As we know from the LPAA approach^{(20),(21)} and ⁽²²⁾ have developed programs that directly aimed at educating and providing communication strategies to care-givers and close family members of the care-recipient. The treatment manages each consumer's emotions, relationships, and activities of daily life. Evidence from these studies also show the effectiveness and importance of training and educating care-givers and how it helps in mitigating the communication gap between the care-giver and care-recipient. This makes it very necessary for the health professionals and speech therapists to make sure that they cater and educate the care-givers on how to make appropriate use of technology so that they don't feel apprehensive and anxious during the sessions as it can also influence the care-recipient. Online sessions and quarantine have placed major repercussions on the care-givers mental well-being and contribute to a lot of anxiety, about 60% of the care-givers think that their life has worsened than before. The social isolation and quarantine are causing feelings of loneliness among people and are affecting their brain in a negative way and care-giving is further adding to this hopelessness. Caregivers are sometimes mentioned as "secondary patients," who require and are worthy of safety, counselling and guidance. Literature review in a study by⁽⁶⁾, depicted that the risk of anxiety and depression escalated by 60% to 70% with each 1 unit increase of the care-giver burden. Adding to this anxiety and depression, the two of them were firmly associated with total care burden score (P<.01). The personal and care burden of caregivers are positively associated with anxiety and depression. Informal care-givers or primary care-givers play a critical role in the prognosis and betterment of patients with communication disorders and as health professionals it's very crucial to make sure this issue is addressed and more interventions are made to deal with care-giver burden and anxiety. In a study by ⁽²³⁾ informal caregiving occurs among all communities and is largely provided by women as also suggested by the outcome of the study where 56% of the respondents were females. Caregiving experience is usually recognized as a long-term stressor, and care-givers often encounter fatalistic psychological, behavioural, and physiological effects on their daily lives and personal health. This point helps us understand how maintaining high quality relationships during this pandemic year can help us in protecting our mental health from the care-giving burden and gloomy impacts of the pandemic. This point should be noted by the health professionals where they can help in planning how to communicate with their care-recipient in an effective manner and how new activities at home can help. A study by ⁽¹⁴⁾ found that caregivers can communicate and build more relaxed relationships with their care-recipients when facilitated by health professionals teaching them strategies and improving their confidence with the aid of those strategies, at least in the home. According to the study, unfortunately 44 %care-givers agree that they don't have enough support from their family, friends and health professionals which needs to be dealt with immediately.

CONCLUSIONS

Care-givers suffer through immense burden which leads to anxiety and depression as stated earlier in the study by ⁽⁸⁾ too. In addition to this the pandemic has further added to the burden and uncertainty about how to deal with care-recipients' new routines and wellbeing concerns. Online sessions might have turned out to be cost effective and saved one's time but it's also contributing to some major concerns like behavioural issues and effectiveness of the therapy. Informal caregivers are very important part and play a very essential role in the improvement of patients with communication disorders. Improvement can be obtained through communication and by addressing caregivers with strategies to build up caregiver capabilities and teach caregivers up-to-date skills that will refine patient safety, help the patient and the care-giver emotionally and psychologically, reducing disappointment and anger and make care effective and safe. Care-givers require appropriate education and skills to deliver care and research has shown that caregivers who are worked out beforehand to provide care (i.e., have the knowledge and skills needed) have minimised burden ⁽²⁴⁾. There is more to be researched and learned about how does care-giving further adds to the patient health and prognosis. Speech and language therapists and health professionals should make sure that they deliver and impart appropriate knowledge and skills as care-givers are engaged in the health care procedure and develop more effective interventions and scales to measure their needs to support the care-giver both mentally and physically reducing their burden and anxiety leading to better prognosis of the patient as well.

Limitations: The pandemic resulted in complications because of which face to face or in-person sessions could not be conducted and so the questionnaires were filled online by the care-givers who would come during the sessions with the patient. The sample size also had to be minimised as a result of pandemic as care-givers got harder to be reached to.

Recommendations: It is recommended that Speech and language pathologists should educate the care-givers with suitable knowledge, skills, and comprehensive counselling sessions and provide them with intervention that could mitigate the burden and thus anxiety in the care-givers, especially in this pandemic duration where anxiety and uncertainty are at peak even among general people. More interventions and tools should be made to identify the needs of care-givers. Added to this the session conducted online should be included with guidelines that can lessen anxiety regarding the use of technology and support should be given to clients and their care-givers who are struggling to understand the process.

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