Abstract

Background: Multiple sclerosis (MS) and Alzheimer’s Disease (AD) are chronic and progressive diseases that have the potential to impose a significant burden on both caregivers and the immediate families of patients. Erickson Levine has described MS and AD caregiver burden on physical health, income, employment status, and health insurance type.

The objective of this study is to compare MS caregiver burden to non-carer burden and to the burden experienced by caregivers of AD patients.

Methods: Data were obtained from the 2009 National Health and Wellness Survey (NHWS), a self-administered, Internet-based questionnaire from a nationally representative sample of older (age 50 and older) white and minority adults. Respondents reported health status, quality of life, productivity, healthcare utilization and caregiver status. Multivariable regressions, adjusting for key characteristics (e.g., age, gender, marital status, depression) were performed. Multivariate Analyses

Results: Compared to non-carers, MS caregivers had greater quality of life impairment, more comorbid illness as evidenced by Charlson Co-morbidity Index, more activity impairment than the non-carers. MS caregivers also had significantly more traditional healthcare provider visits, ER visits and hospitalizations than the non-carers.

Conclusions: The results of this analysis of a national survey reveals the hidden toll of those providing care for MS patients and highlights the need to recognize their burden so that appropriate measures can be implemented.

Background

Chronic and progressive diseases resulting in deterioration of functioning and the need for assistance with daily activities.

The only difference that was observed was that MS caregivers had significantly more burden compared with non-caregivers, in addition, the results suggest that even greater burden to other individuals than observed among AD caregivers. The results of this analysis of a national survey reveals the hidden toll of those providing care for MS patients and highlights the need to recognize their burden so that appropriate measures can be implemented.

Methods

Data were obtained from the 2009 National Health and Wellness Survey (NHWS), a self-administered, Internet-based questionnaire from a nationally representative sample of older (age 50 and older) adults. Respondents reported health status, quality of life, productivity, healthcare utilization and caregiver status. Multivariable regressions, adjusting for key characteristics (e.g., age, gender, marital status, depression) were performed.

Results

Compared to non-carers, MS caregivers had significantly greater quality of life impairment (84.7% vs 74.9%) and more activity impairment (27.6% vs 12.6%). MS caregivers also had significantly more traditional healthcare provider visits, ER visits and hospitalizations than the non-carers.

Conclusions

The results of this analysis of a national survey reveals the hidden toll of those providing care for MS patients and highlights the need to recognize their burden so that appropriate measures can be implemented.