

IMPACT OF URINARY INCONTINENCE ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BURDEN OF FAMILY CAREGIVERS

Hypothesis / aims of study

Urinary incontinence is an important factor in the care of invalid family members living at home or institutionalized in nursing homes. It impairs the quality of life (QOL) of not only the cared individuals themselves but also their caregivers. The impacts of urinary incontinence on the QOL of patients have recently been the focus of aggressive investigations; however, sufficient studies on the effects of urinary incontinence on the QOL or burden of the caregivers have not been undertaken. We conducted a survey to assess the impacts of urinary incontinence on the QOL and the burden experienced by caregivers providing care to the frail elderly or invalid family members with urinary incontinence. In this paper, we report the impacts of urinary incontinence of the cared individuals on the psychological burden experienced by the caregivers by using a valid means to measure this burden—the Zarit Caregiver Burden Interview.

Study design, materials and methods

An Internet panel for family caregivers, managed by the Link Consulting Associate-Japan Co., includes 7,316 members who provide care to invalid family members at home in Japan. We requested the members of this panel to respond to an online questionnaire in order to assess the impact of urinary incontinence on their burden and QOL. The questionnaire included questions on the continence status and age of the invalid family members, the age and occupation status of their caregivers, the relationship of the caregivers to the invalid family members, duration of care, medication status, and expenses incurred as a result of nursing care. In order to assess the psychological burden on the caregivers, the Zarit Caregiver Burden Interview (ZBI) [1] was included in the questionnaire. ZBI is a valid questionnaire, which consist of 22 questions related to the impact of the patient's disabilities on the QOL of their caregivers. For each item, caregivers were instructed to indicate how frequently they regard providing care to invalid family members as a burden: never, rarely, sometimes, rather frequently, or almost always—the rating of each item can range from 0 (never) to 4 (always), with the total score ranging from 0 to 88. The questions were aimed at eliciting information regarding the areas most frequently mentioned by caregivers as problem areas, including health, psychological well-being, finances, social life, and their relationship with the one being cared for. The Japanese version of the ZBI was also well validated. Further, the grade of disability of the cared individuals was assessed by enquiring about “the level of care need,” which was established in the nursing care insurance system by the Japanese Ministry of Wealth and Labor. The level of care need ranges from 0 (minimum care need) to 5 (maximum care need). This level of care need is assessed on the basis of the abilities of the invalid family members to conduct routine activities.

Results

A total of 1,324 caregivers responded to the questionnaire and relevant data obtained from 1,203 caregivers were analyzed; among them, 639 caregivers (34.9% male respondents and 65.1% female respondents) provided care to family members with urinary incontinence (group 1) and 564 (48.0% male respondents and 52.0% female respondents) provided care to those without urinary incontinence (group 2). Majority of the caregivers were rather young—68.1% in group 1 and 78.7% in group 2 were under 50 years of age and 87.8% in group 1 and 92.5% in group 2 were under 60 years of age. With regard to the gender of the cared individuals, 40.9% and 49.2% were males in group 1 and group 2, respectively. Majority of the invalid family members were old—91.2% in group 1 and 85.5% in group 2 were over 60 years of age. The mean total ZBI score in group 1 was 39.0, which was significantly higher ($p = 0.0034$, Wilcoxon signed-rank test) than the score of 35.7 in group 2. Fig. 1 shows a comparison of the scores for each item of the ZBI between the two groups and demonstrates that the scores for a majority of the items are higher in group 1. Fig. 2 shows the mean total ZBI score based on the level of care need. Regardless of the level of care need, the ZBI scores in group 1 tended to be higher than those in group 2.

Fig. 1 Comparison of each item of the ZBI between the two groups

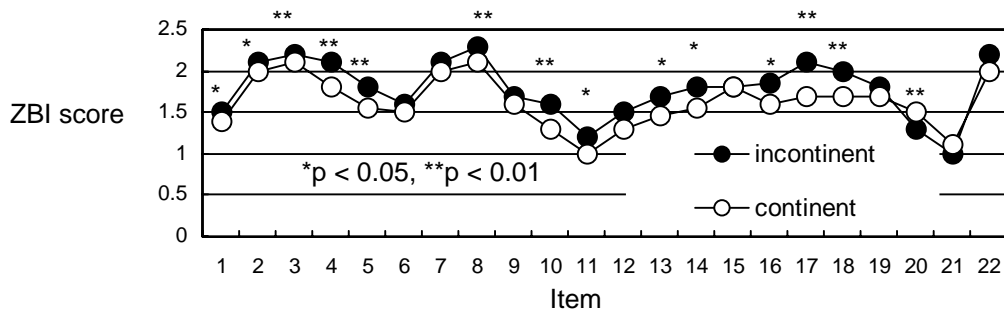
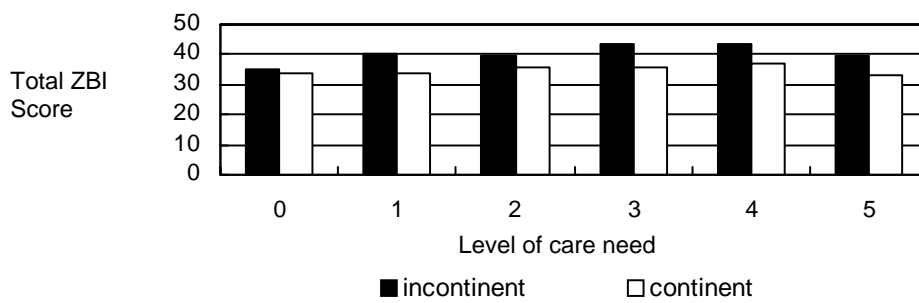


Fig.2 Total ZBI score according to the level of care need



Interpretation of results

Urinary incontinence in the cared family members gives a negative impact on the burden of the caregivers in a variety of areas in daily lives. Regardless of the level of care need, the burden of caregivers providing care to invalid family members with urinary incontinence are heavier than those providing care to those without incontinence.

Concluding message

Urinary incontinence of invalid family members is assumed to be a condition laying additional burden on their caregivers irrespective of the level of disability of the one cared for.

Rererences

[1] Reliability and validity of the Japanese version of the Zarit Caregiver Burden Interview. Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences, 51:281-287, 1997

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