THE PSYCHOPATHOLOGICAL BURDEN OF OUTPATIENTS WITH ALZHEIMER'S DEMENTIA AND THEIR CAREGIVERS - THE IDEA-STUDY (IMPROVING ALZHEIMER'S DEMENTIA TREATMENT: EPIDEMIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF PATIENTS', CAREGIVERS' AND DOCTORS' UNMET NEEDS AND BARRIERS)

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Little is known about the impact of neuropsychiatric symptoms in Alzheimer’s Dementia (AD) patients and the associated psychopathological burden for their caregivers (CG) in familial care.

Aims:

1) Describing the familial care situation of patients with mild/ moderate AD.

2) Exploring the impact of neuropsychiatric symptoms in patients with AD on caregiver burden.

Nationwide random sample of N=500 AD-outpatients and their CG. Patients were assessed by their office-based physicians. CG filled out a questionnaire and subsequently were interviewed by the research team (N=221). Patients' neuropsychiatric symptoms were assessed by a standardized clinical appraisal (physician). The caregiver interview included the Neuropsychiatric Inventory, Depression Screening Questionnaire and Anxiety Screening Questionnaire.

According to the physicians 91.6% and according to CG 95.7% of patients revealed clinically significant neuropsychiatric symptoms. CGs rated a higher mean number of syndromes (4.5 vs. 3.2 (physicians); p< .001). CG most frequently rated patients' apathy (66.4%) and depression (61.9%); physicians depression (54.3%) and irritability (44.2%). Among CGs, depressive symptoms were present in 42.7%, GAD symptoms in 16.7%. Depressive symptoms were more frequent in females (OR=2.9) and offspring (OR=2.0), while GAD symptoms were elevated only in females (OR=8.0). Both complications were inversely associated with CG age (≥71 vs. ≤55 years, OR=0.3). Patients’ apathy and depression were associated with CGs’ depressive symptoms; patients’ apathy and irritability with GAD symptoms in CG.

Findings underline an exceedingly high burden of depressive spectrum symptoms in early stages, which seem to significantly increase family care burden and contribute to increased psychopathology burden in CG.