

P03-415

CAREGIVING INCREASES HEALTH COMPLAINTS IN MIDDLE-AGED CAREGIVERS OF AUTISTIC OFFSPRING: THE ROLE OF YEARS CARING

E. Gonzalez-Bono, S. De Andres-Garcia, A. Romero-Martinez, P. Sariñana-Gonzalez, M.V. Sanchis-Calatayud, L. Moya-Albiol

Psychobiology, University of Valencia, Valencia, Spain

Introduction: Caregiving of offspring with a chronic illness is a highly stressful vital experience. Previous studies with parents of schizophrenic persons revealed that these situations increase health complaints (González-Bono et al., 2009), with the duration of caring being a relevant variable (Contell-Montaña et al., 2010). The higher age of the caregivers of schizophrenia can contribute to this health unbalance, but little is known in younger samples.

Aim/objective: To test whether middle-aged caregivers (parents of autistic persons) present higher health disturbances than controls and to investigate the moderating role of duration of caring

Methods: Health complaints and resting levels of immunoglobulin A (IgA) were measured in a sample of 38 middle-aged caregivers of autistic offspring (24 mothers/14 fathers) and 35 parents of healthy persons (17 women/18 men) of similar characteristics.

Results: Caregivers report more immunological, muscular, genital-urinary and general health complaints than controls. Additionally, the scores of all scales and total score of Goldberg Health Questionnaire were higher in caregivers than in non caregivers. No significant differences were found in IgA levels. Among caregivers, fewer years of caring were associated with more anxiety and lower IgA levels.

Conclusions: Chronic stress of caregiving of autistic offspring is associated with more health complaints. The number of years after unequivocal diagnosis of autism has a moderating effect on immunological disturbances and anxiety in care givers. Further research is needed to clarify whether the interventions focused on anxiety can influence the low antibodies levels and decrease future health complaints.