

AS11-01 - DISTRESS AND HOPE IN CARING FOR TERMINALLY ILL CANCER PATIENTS

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Introduction: Cancer is a leading cause of death world-wide. Many patients spend the end of their lives at home while being cared for by family members. Consequently, the caring relatives face high burden and are prone to psychiatric symptoms. At the same time they are often reluctant to communicate their needs or seek help in professional palliative care settings.

Aims: This talk presents the baseline results of an ongoing study investigating caregivers' distress due to their caring role together with their needs and perceived burden, and its relation to hope and psychiatric symptoms with a specific focus on the caregivers' gender.

Methods: We report a cross-sectional investigation using structured questionnaires to assess caregiver burden and needs, distress, hope, psychiatric symptoms, and quality of life.

Results: Female caregivers who were willing to participate in the study clearly outnumbered male caregivers. Results in terms of specific needs and perceived burden were similar for genders. Results for distress, hope and psychiatric symptoms were mixed.

Conclusion: Caregivers of terminally ill patients are a high risk group for the development of psychiatric disorders. Paying due regard to their burden and needs should be a central issue in palliative care and gender specific differences should be taken into account.