

# Caregivers' burden and coping for patients with terminal illnesses

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Patients with terminal illnesses often have complex physical, psychosocial and spiritual needs. Caregivers are frequently expected to bear the caregiving burden with little known about how they cope with their duties. This study aimed to explore caregiver coping and the burden of looking after patients with terminal illnesses. **Methods:** This was an observational study on 35 caregivers of patients admitted to the palliative care unit, Queen Elizabeth Hospital from May to July 2023. Factors influencing resilience and the burden of primary caregivers were analyzed using SPSS. **Results:** The median age was 45 years old (IQR 22), with female predominance (63.2%). The majority of them were informal caregivers, including spouses (28.9%), children (55.3%) and siblings (2.6%). The commonest coping strategies of caregivers were emotional coping, acceptance and religion. Conscientiousness (50%) and agreeableness (47.2%) were the most prevalent personalities reported using the Big Five Personality Inventory. The median Brief Resilience Scale was 15 (IQR 3), where 27% fell under the low resilience category. The median Zarit Caregiver Burden Scale was 24 (IQR 20), where 17.1% reported moderate to severe caregiver burden. Caregiver resilience was significantly lower among patients who were less resilient ( $p=0.040$ ) and more anxious ( $p=0.031$ ). Caregiver burden was significantly higher among informal caregivers compared to formal caregivers ( $p=0.039$ ), and for families with lower household incomes ( $p=0.030$ ). **Conclusion:** Resilience and mental well-being of patients could impact their respective caregivers. Social factors appeared to be the main determining factor of caregiver burden.