

(P01) CAREGIVER STRAIN: A BY-PRODUCT OF COGNITIVE DEFICIT IN PEOPLE WITH MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS?

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Background: Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a chronic disease that can have a profound impact on the life of the person with the disease and his or her caregivers (Samuel & Carvallo, 1999). Over the disease trajectory, the person with MS (PwMS) must adapt to an array of symptoms that affect physical, behavioral, cognitive, and psychological functioning. Many demands can be placed on caregivers, especially as they have to adapt to the changing needs of the PwMS (Kalb, 2006).

Objective: This study aimed to explore whether discrepancies exist between the ratings of memory and neurobehavioral functioning (ie, apathy, disinhibition, and executive functioning) given by people with MS and their caregivers, and whether these discrepancies were related to caregiver burden and strain.

Design: An exploratory cross-sectional study using neuropsychological assessment of people with MS and questionnaires obtaining ratings from people with MS and their designated caregivers.

Participants: Ninety-three individuals with MS were approached, and 30 dyads (the PwMS and his or her chosen caregiver) were recruited. Each PwMS had previously completed a neuropsychological assessment to confirm objective measure of cognitive impairment. The PwMS then rated his or her memory and neurobehavioral functioning using the Memory Awareness Rating Scale (MARS) and the Frontal System Behavioral Scale (FrSBe). Caregivers rated PwMS functioning using the informant's version of the MARS and the FrSBe, and their level of carer burden using the Burden Interview.

Results: No significant differences were found between how people with MS rated their memory and neurobehavioral functioning compared with their caregivers. Discrepancies between ratings of neurobehavioral functioning in dyads were found to be related to caregiver burden, although ratings of memory were not. When a PwMS rates his or her neurobehavioral functioning to be less impaired than the caregiver regards it, the caregiver is more likely to report feeling burdened. These findings support previous research. However, in order to gain a clearer picture of the factors predicting carer burden, this research is continuing.

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