

(S86) CAREGIVER AND GENDER IN MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Margarita Ruiz, MS; Maria Moscoso, MS

Cuba

Multiple Sclerosis Cuba carried out a survey of 50 people with multiple sclerosis in order to understand their relationships with their families and caregivers. There were 34 women and 16 men, all with a disability measured by the Expanded Disability Status Scale as 7 or higher. They were all diagnosed after the age of 20 years. The physical and emotional conditions of caregivers were studied depending on family situations. It was clear that the difficulties caregivers face, such as the strain of coping with an unpredictable chronic illness and the lack of respite care or outside help, seriously affect the relationship between the caregiver and the patient and often have a negative effect on the marital relationship. In women's case, 25 were married at the time of diagnosis of the illness and 20 divorced afterward, representing 80% of the total. In the case of the 16 men, 14 had stable relationships and only 4 (<29%) were separated or divorced. In these four cases, another female family member assumed care responsibility. These facts may show that women's role in society still differs from men's role.

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