Chinese caregivers' experiences in the care of family members living with dementia: A systematic review and meta-synthesis

by

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Abstract

Background: Dementia is a leading cause of disability in people aged 65 years and older. China has the largest number of people with dementia, accounting for approximately 25 per cent of the total global population living with dementia. China also has a large diaspora living in developed countries. Chinese family caregivers, influenced by filial piety, are considered the cornerstone of caring for people with dementia at home. Understanding their experiences is vital for providing relevant support for them. However, systematic reviews on Chinese family caregivers' experiences in Greater China and developed countries are scarce.

Aim: The aim of this review is to understand Chinese family caregivers' experiences of caring for people with dementia.

Methods: This systematic review applied the Joanna Briggs Institute meta-aggregation approach. A comprehensive search was conducted using six English databases, four Chinese databases and manual searching. In total, 36 articles were included in the review. They were categorised into two study groups: studies from Greater China and studies from the Chinese diaspora in developed countries. The data were extracted, analysed and synthesised.

Results: Seven synthesised findings were identified from these two study groups: 1) multidimensional caregiver burdens; 2) barriers to dementia care; 3) positive coping strategies that caregivers use; 4) motivations for caregivers; 5) education and training; 6) family dynamics; and 7) expectations for dementia care services. The categories that supported these synthesised findings were slightly different between the two study groups. The lack of government-funded dementia care services was widely reported in the studies in Greater China, while barriers to accessing and using dementia care services were more widely reported in the studies in developed countries.

Discussion: Based on the comparison of findings between the two study groups, three issues were discussed. First, an insufficient level of social support for Chinese caregivers was found, and it must be addressed to improve caregivers' wellbeing and socialisation with others. Second, providing various care services is essential for reducing caregiver burden and improving quality of life. Third, the lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate dementia care services in developed countries must be carefully analysed and addressed.

Conclusion: The synthesised findings have informed recommendations for policymakers and dementia care service providers. They also have implications for further research that focuses on dementia care in Greater China and developed countries.

Keywords: family caregiver, experience, dementia, Chinese, systematic review