

**ORIGINAL PAPER**

**Informal Care in a Formal Setting: the Case of a Neurosurgery  
Clinic in Western Greece**

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**Abstract**

**Introduction:** Informal care is a common phenomenon that occurs in all hospitals around the world. Greek and International literature define informal care as an unpaid care that provided to hospitalized patients from family members, friends and in general from the close social environment. In Greece informal care has become a tradition mainly due to the shortage of nurses in hospitals.

**Aim:** The main aim of the present study is to investigate the informal caregivers' opinion about informal care in a neurosurgical clinic.

**Methodology:** The sample consisted of 39 in-hospital informal caregivers from a neurosurgical clinic of a hospital in Western Greece. The data were collected in 2012 within a period of three months. A self-reported, validated and reused questionnaire was completed. The statistical analysis was based on the statistical measure SPSS and the reliability of the scales were analyzed by using alpha-cronbach factor.

**Results:** The majority of the informal caregivers in the neurosurgical clinic were women and the main reasons that stayed by the bedside of the patient were: to support psychologically the patient, the severity of the patient's condition and fear about the patient's safety. Caregivers agree with doctor's and nursing staff's recommendation that someone should stay close to the patient and most of them agree to hire a privately paid helper. The gender of caregivers does not affect the level of services that they offer to the patient neither the educational level but age does. Finally, the study showed that caregivers want to be informed of the patient's condition and most of them prefer to get the information from nurses also, they need emotional support from health professionals, to learn how to face patients' emotional needs and to know about the financial availability from insurance companies.

**Conclusion:** In-hospital Informal caregivers play an important role by providing help to patients as well as to health professionals. The design of appropriate supportive techniques and training programs from health professionals will help caregivers to strengthen their role.

**Key words:** Informal care, caregivers, health professionals, neurosurgical patients.