

**ORIGINAL PAPER**

**Informal Care Provision by the Family to Hospitalized Patients in a Rehabilitation Clinic of Western Greece**

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**Abstract**

**Introduction:** Recognizing the burden imposed on families and society by long-term care of chronically ill patients, there is a need to empower caregivers and take measures for slowing the deterioration of the quality of life for the caregiver and the patient.

**Aim:** The main aim of the present study was to investigate the caregivers' views regarding the services provided by them for their hospitalized relatives and their opinions about the their health education needs, informational needs and needs for support in a rehabilitation clinic of Western Greece.

**Methodology:** The sample consisted of 75 caregivers of hospitalized patients who provided unpaid services and they wanted after informed consent to participate in the study. Data were collected in 2012 within a period of 6 months. A self-reported questionnaire was completed and the statistical analysis was performed by the use of SPSS.

**Results:** This study shows the need for caregivers' health education on technical care and general knowledge about the disease, on how to handle an emergency situation at home. Obvious were also the need for information about the benefits to disabled people from public and non-profit organizations, but also the need for learning how to support emotionally patient. Information about the transition from hospital to home, emerged as necessary through this study. Caregivers felt that it is the obligation of the hospital to provide training and health education and indicated nurses as appropriate health professionals for the role. Also the need for emotional support for caregivers by health professionals was highlighted and caregivers believe that adequate staffing of rehabilitation units will allow health professionals to provide time for emotional support of caregivers, but also time for casual conversation on general subjects, in a civilized environment, aiming to empower caregivers for better care of patients.

**Conclusion:** The health education needs of the caregiver must be sufficient, after careful assessment of training needs, information and emotional support and by strengthening the concept of self-care of the caregiver. To address these needs, specific training plan is required, preparing the caregiver in his new role and adjustment to the new lifestyle.

**Key words:** Rehabilitation, informal care, caregivers, patients, health professionals.