

A Qualitative Meta-Synthesis of the Caregiving Experiences of Family Caregivers for Elderly Cancer Patients in China: Implications for Health Social Work

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Abstract : Summary: As the need for elder care increases in China due to a growing aging population and, in particular, rising cancer rates, it becomes increasingly important to also support family caregivers, who are often the main source of care. We used a qualitative meta-synthesis to systematically evaluate and integrate the caregiving experiences of family caregivers of elderly cancer patients as revealed by articles published in Chinese journals. Findings: Nine studies are included in the final analysis. The caregiver experiences they describe are synthesized into three primary themes: care needs, care burden, and care gains, with numerous secondary themes. Besides the findings that seem to align with other findings across cultures, we have highlighted three main discoveries from the synthesis that may be quite specific to the Chinese context: 1. more sub-themes related to specific caregiving skills caregivers of cancer patients; 2. a call for health professionals to improve their communication skills with family caregivers; 3. the important role of filial piety. Applications: Our findings can be used to help health social workers and relevant policymakers in China support family caregivers by identifying the education and training required for caregivers, ways to make the most of potential care gains, and ways to ease care burdens.

Keywords : cancer, Chinese family caregivers, caregiving skills, care burden, care gains, health social work

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