

Family Caregiver Transitions and Health in Old Age: A Longitudinal Perspective

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Abstract : The conditions of increased morbidity in an aging population cause the need for family care to become more common at an advanced age. The role of family caregivers may well last for a long time but may also change over time, from being caregivers to being non-caregivers or vice versa. Although demands associated with family caring change as individuals enter into, engage with, and exit from this role, the evidence regarding the impact of family caregiving transitions on the health of older carers is still limited. This study comprised individuals (n=2294, 60+years) from the southern part of Sweden included in the project Swedish National study of Aging and Care. Caregiving transitions are discussed in the categories: enter, exit, and continuing during a six-year period. Individuals who exited caregiving during the time were older than those who continued or entered into the role of caregiving. At the six-year follow-up, caregivers who were continuing or had exited caregiving were more often worried about their own health compared to baseline. Resembling findings were not found in those who entered caregiving. Family caregiving transitions of exiting, entering or continuing had no effect on the individuals' functional, physical and mental health expect for participants who entered in caregiving. For them, entering the role of family caregiving was associated with an improvement in physical health during the six years follow up period. Conclusion: Although the health impact of different caregiving transitions in late life does not differ, individual conditions and health at baseline are important parameters to take into consideration to improve long-term health in family caregivers.

Keywords : family caregiving, health, old age, transition

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