

# Caregivers' Need for Support in an Outpatient Cancer Setting

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**PURPOSE:** To investigate the needs of caregivers for individuals with cancer and to gain insight into how to provide support for caregivers.

**PARTICIPANTS & SETTING:** 47 caregivers for patients with cancer in an outpatient setting in Denmark.

**METHODOLOGIC APPROACH:** This qualitative study used focus group interviews. Data were analyzed using a hermeneutics framework and Malterud's systematic text condensation.

**FINDINGS:** Results of the nine focus groups showed the experiences of caregiving. Theme 1 was interdependence, which consisted of the subthemes responsibility, a moral obligation and loneliness and talking. The results also revealed a second theme, different needs for support, which contained three subthemes: support through personal time, support through peers, and support through talking to healthcare professionals.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR NURSING:** Caregivers for individuals with cancer do not distinguish their own needs and perspectives of support from those of the patients. Caregivers' need for support includes having support from peers, talking to healthcare professionals, and having personal time. Support of caregivers should allow for focusing on the family as a unit instead of solely addressing the patient.

**KEYWORDS** caregivers; support; outpatient; patients with cancer

**ONF, 46(6), 757-767.**

**DOI** 10.1188/19.ONF.757-767

Cancer incidence and prevalence have increased globally (Jemal & Torre, 2018; Sundhedsdatastyrelsen, 2017). The implications for Danish society are imminent in terms of expenses associated with aggressive and enhanced treatments (Danske Regioner, KL, Økonomi- Og Indenrigsministeriet, Finansministeriet, & Ministeriet for Sundhed og Forebyggelse, 2013). Therefore, there is political focus on efficient use of resources (Sundhedsstyrelsen, 2016). The focus on efficient health-care services has led to fast-tracked treatments and an increasing number of patients in outpatient clinics for care and treatment (Sundhedsdatastyrelsen, 2016). The change of setting related to treatment and care from the hospital to an outpatient setting engages relatives as caregivers, which is also reflected in other countries (Australian Government, Department of Social Services, 2018; Levit, Balogh, Nass, & Ganz, 2013). However, research exploring the needs and experiences of caregivers for individuals with cancer is limited in the context of Danish healthcare services and often focuses on specific illnesses and related symptoms instead of the general challenges and experiences related to caring for an individual with cancer.

Caregiving for an individual with cancer has proven to have a severe impact on the physical, emotional, and psychological health of the caregiver (Deeken, Taylor, Mangan, Yabroff, & Ingham, 2003; Molassiotis, Zheng, Denton-Cardew, Swindell, & Brunton, 2010; Papastavrou, Charalambous, & Tsangari, 2009; Yildiz, Karakaş, Güngörmüş, & Cengiz, 2017). Girgis et al. (2013) conducted a longitudinal survey, including 547, 519, and 443 caregivers at 6, 12, and 24 months after the care recipient's diagnosis, respectively. The study found that unmet needs increased over time in relation to caregivers' anxiety and depression. Jepsen (2015) found that caregivers experienced additional burden when care was provided in an outpatient treatment facility. Dieperink, Coyne, Creedy, and Østergaard (2018) found that, compared to patients,