

## **High prevalence of anxiety symptoms in spouses of demented persons**

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Comparing to depression only few studies have been focusing at anxiety symptoms among carers of persons suffering from dementia. In this study we have compared anxiety among 76 spouses of patients in a mild to moderate stage of dementia, recruited from seven memory clinics in Norway, with 98 geriatric in-patients acutely admitted to a geriatric ward due to a serious somatic condition and 68 healthy controls recruited from citizen centres in Oslo.

*Methods:* Anxiety symptoms were assessed by means of the 12-items version of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI-X-1). Demographics such as age, gender, educational and occupational status of the three groups were also collected.

*Results:* The mean age was 79.8 (SD 6.10). The females reported more anxiety symptoms compared with the males, however not a significant difference (21.3 (SD 7.85) and 19.6 (SD 6.99),  $p=0.08$ ), respectively. When comparing the three groups of elderly, we found no significant differences in reported anxiety according to the STAI between the spouses of demented patients (mean 22.45 (SD 7.43) and the geriatric in-patients (mean 23.4 (SD 7.60)). However, these two groups of elderly did report significantly more anxiety than did the healthy controls (mean 14.7 (SD 3.04)). When exploring possible explanatory factors for anxiety among spouses of demented patients, the only factors that seemed to explain the level of anxiety was the carer being a wife and the amount of neuropsychiatric symptoms of the patient, whereas the cognitive decline as well as the ADL-dysfunction did not contribute to the explanation of state anxiety.

*Conclusion:* Anxiety symptoms are prevalent in elderly people facing stressful events such as serious somatic illnesses or living in a household with a partner suffering from dementia. As anxiety may have a negative impact on the spouse's capacity of giving care to the demented partner, anxiety symptoms should be taken into consideration when developing interventions for carers.