

THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF UNPAID MALE CARERS AGED 65 AND ABOVE – A LITERATURE REVIEW

Klara Lorenz, Adelina Comas-Herrera, Martin Knapp

Klara Lorenz

PhD Student

London School of Economics and Political Science

K.H.Lorenz@lse.ac.uk

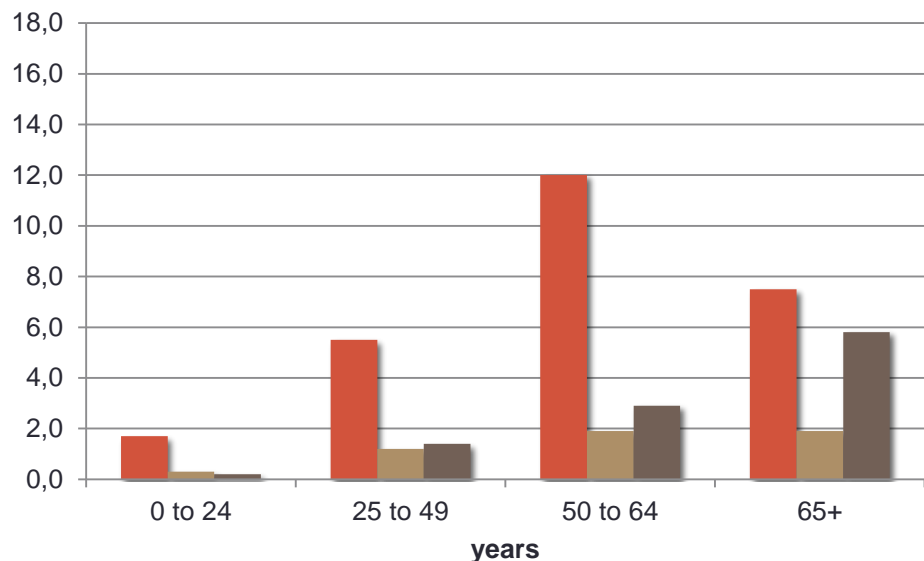


THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

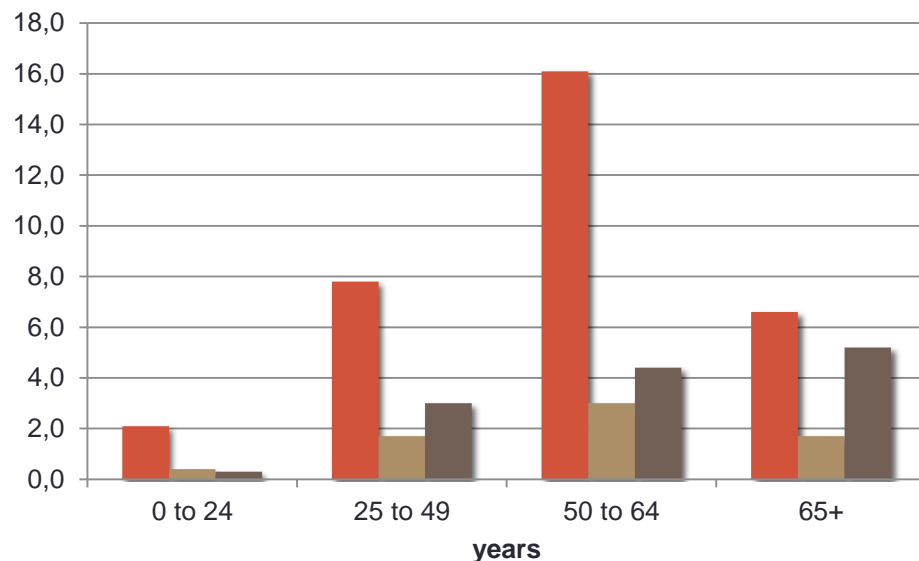


Why does the provision of care by male unpaid carers aged 65 and over deserve special attention?

Male carers in England, 2011

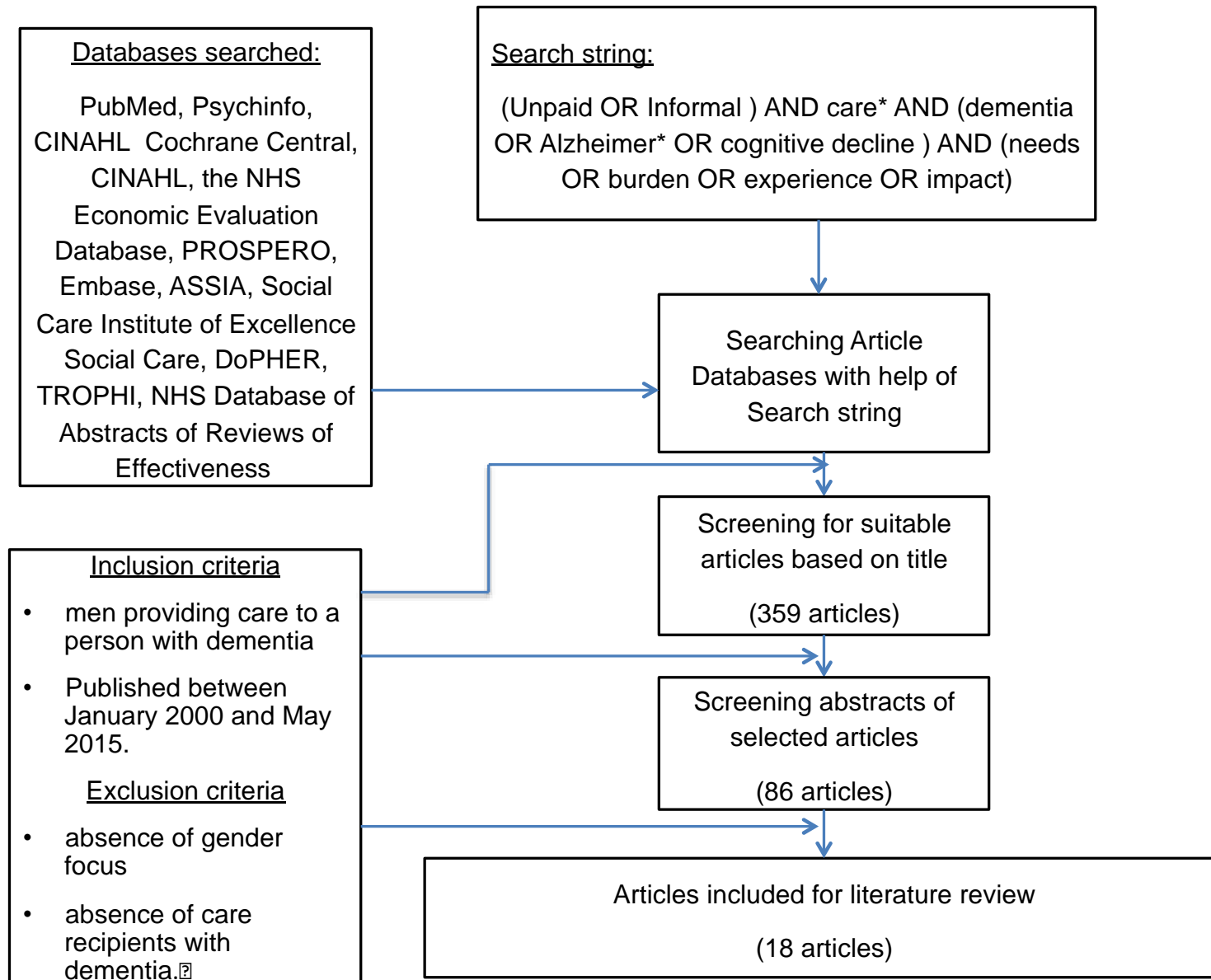


Female carers in England, 2011



- 1 to 19 hours unpaid care
- 20 to 49 hours unpaid care
- 50 hours or more unpaid care

Search strategy



Description of studies reviewed

- **Studies included were conducted in:**
 - Canada (1), the United States (4, 6, 7, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18)
 - the United Kingdom (2), Spain (5), Portugal (11, 12), France (17), Finland (8)
 - Australia (3)
 - South Africa (9)
- **Carer age**
 - 13 studies: Mean age above 65 years (2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18)
 - 3 studies: Report age range (1, 6, 14)
 - 2 studies: Report mean age for different carer groups (7, 17)

Description of studies reviewed

- **12 studies focus on male carers**
 - 11 studies: husbands providing care to their wives with dementia (1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16)
 - 1 study: husbands, a son and a brother providing dementia care (6)
- **6 studies compare unpaid male and female carers for people with dementia**
 - 3 studies: compare spousal carers (4, 8, 18)
 - 2 studies: compare spousal carers, child carers (and others) (5, 7)
 - 1 study: did not specify relationship between carer and care recipient (17)

Themes

- Motivation to care
- Approaches to care
- Satisfaction derived from care
- Carer health
- Stress, emotional difficulty & dealing with difficulties
- Identity & masculinity

Findings

- **Motivation to care**

- Marital vows, love, affection, commitment, reciprocity, duty (1, 3, 9, 11, 12)
- “She would have done the same“ (3)
- Importance: positive emotional bonds prior to the onset of dementia (3, 12, 16)
- Male carers derive meaning, satisfaction and pride from new skills and from providing good care. (9, 12)

- **Gender comparison:**

- husbands report higher “obligation to care“ than wives (7)

Findings

- **Approaches to care**

- Instrumental, systematic, managerial, task oriented, comparison to job (3, 4, 6, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14)
- Maintaining in control (4, 6, 9, 14)
- Emotional detachment (4)
- Avoidance of long-term decision making (14)

Findings

- **Satisfaction derived from care**
 - Pride and satisfaction from providing good care (4, 6, 14)
 - Increased closeness and intimacy between carer and care-recipient (6, 12)
 - Positive recognition, visibility and gratitude (3, 4, 11, 12, 14)

Findings

- **Carer health**

- *Mental health*: 22% of carers at potential risk of developing mental disorder (9); 31% of carers yielded scores “indicating clinical depression“ (16)
- **Gender effects:**
- *Mental health*: absence of depression among husband carers (5); statistically significant difference in consumption of psychotropic medication (119 women vs. 25 men) (17)
- *Physical health*: no significant difference between men and women (7); male carers reported more comorbidities than women (8); higher physical functioning and fewer physiological stress responses among men (18)
- suggested relationship between hours of care, functional decline, age and socio-demographic characteristics (10)

Findings

- **Stress, emotional difficulty & dealing with difficulties**

- Stress due to uncertainty and unpredictability of care-recipient behaviour and progression of disease (2, 4, 6, 9, 11, 14).
- Reduction in leisure time, difficulties in relationships with family members, financial concerns (4, 9, 14)
- Lost companionship, loss of affection, feelings of isolation (4, 9, 14)
- Emotional detachment (4, 6,13)

- ***Gender effects:***
- Male carers are reported to experience less burden than female carers (5, 7)
- Male gender “protective against high burden“ (8)
- Dealing with behavioural difficulties: use of coercion and active constraints by men and women; use of enforced compliance – “physical or intimidating means“ – when necessary reported by male carers (4, 14)

Findings

- **Identity & masculinity**

- Invisibility (12, 14)
- Carers report acknowledgement mostly for „masculine“ task (13)
- Carers ironically refer to their new role with terms such as “man-woman“ (11)
- Comparison of own role to health professionals (11)
- Male carers identify themselves as husbands rather than carers (11)
- Fluidity of masculine identity may be linked to education, income and age (2, 11)

Gaps in the literature

- Little focus on the needs of male carers
- While male carers report the experience of stress and burden this is not always picked up in studies using standardised tests
- Little knowledge on how male carers deal with burden
- Little focus on carer morbidities and the impact on providing care
- Scarcity of information of the presence of co-morbidities in the person with dementia
- Research on male carers aged 65 and above focuses only on traditional spousal care

References

1. Atta-Konadu, E., Keller, H.H and Daly, J. (2011) "The food-related role shift experiences of spousal male care partners and their wives with dementia" *Journal of Aging Studies*, 25(3), pp.305-315.
2. Baker, K.L., Robertson, N. Connelly, D. (2010) "Men caring for wives or partners with dementia: masculinity, strain and gain". *Aging & Mental Health*, 14(3), pp.319-327.
3. Cahill, S. (2000) "Elderly husbands caring at home for wives diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease: Are male caregivers really different?" *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 35(1), pp.53-72.
4. Calasanti, T and King, N. (2007) "Taking 'Women's Work' 'Like a Man': Husbands' Experiences of Care Work", *The Gerontologist*, 47(4), pp.516-527.
5. Conde-Sala, J.L., Garre-Olmo, J., Turro-Garriga, O., Vilalta-Franch, J., Lopez-Pousa, S. (2010) "Differential features of burden between spouse and adult-child caregivers of patients with Alzheimer's disease: An exploratory comparative design", *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 47(10), pp.1262-1273.
6. McFarland, P.L. and Sanders, S. (2000) "Educational support groups for male caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer's disease" *American Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*, 15(6), pp.367-373.
7. Friedemann, M.-L. and Buckwalter, K.C. (2014) "Family Caregiver Role and Burden Related to Gender and Family Relationship", *Journal of Family Nursing*, 20(3), pp.313-336.
8. Pöysti, M.M., Laakkonen, M.-L., Strandberg, T., Savikko, N., Tilvis, R.S., Eloniemi-Sulkava, U., Pitkälä, K.H. (2012) "Gender Differences in Dementia Spousal Caregiving", *International Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*.
9. Pretorius, C., Walker, S. and Heyns, P.M. (2009) "Sense of coherence amongst male caregivers in dementia: A South African perspective", *Dementia*, 8(1), pp.79-94.
10. Rahrig Jenkins, K., Kabeto, M.U., Langa, K.M. (2009) "Does caring for your spouse harm one's health? Evidence from a United States nationally-representative sample of older adults", *Ageing & Society*, 29(2), pp.227-293.

References

11. Ribeiro, O., Paul, C. and Nogueira, C. (2007) "Real men, real husbands: Caregiving and masculinities in later life", *Journal of Aging Studies*, 21(4), pp.302-313.
12. Ribeiro, O. and Paul, C. (2008) "Older male carers and the positive aspects of care" *Ageing & Society*, 28(2), pp.165-183.
13. Russel, R. (2007) "The Work of Elderly Men Caregivers: From Caregivers to an Unseen World", *Men and Masculinities*, 9(3), pp.298-314.
14. Sampson, M.S. and Clark, A. (2015) "'Deferred or chickened out?' Decision making among male carers of people with dementia" *Dementia (London)*.
15. Sanders, S. and Power, J. (2009) "Roles, responsibilities, and relationships among older husbands caring for wives with progressive dementia and other chronic conditions", *Health and Social Work*, 34(1), pp.41-51.
16. Shanks-McElroy, H.A. and Strobino, J. (2001) "Male caregivers of spouses with Alzheimer's disease: Risk factors and health status", *American Journal of Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias*, 16(3), pp.167-175.
17. Thomas, P., Chantoin-Merlet, S., Hazif-Thomas, C., Belmin, J., Montagne, B., Clément, J.-P., Lebruchec, M., and Billon, R. (2002) "Complaints of informal caregivers providing home care for dementia patients: The Pixel study" *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, 17(11), pp.1034-1044.
18. Thompson, R.L., Lewis, S.L., Murphy, M.R., Hale, M.R., Blackwell, P.H., Acton, G.J., Clough, D.H., Patrick, G.J., and Bonner, P.N. (2004) "Are there Sex Differences in Emotional and Biological Responses in Spousal Caregivers of Patients with Alzheimer's Disease?" *Biological Research For Nursing*, 5(4), pp.319-330.

References

- Office for National Statistics (2013) “Full story: The gender gap in unpaid care provision: is there an impact on health and economic position?” London: Office for National Statistics.