Self-care in ostomy patients and their caregivers

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Introduction:
Patients with an ostomy have to face great challenges, not only just on physical, but also on emotional, psychological, and social level. Health professionals have a key role, supporting adaptation, encouraging patients to be involved in stoma care directly, and creating the best conditions to promote an effective self-management.

Aim:
To describe the self-care’s (SC) levels in ostomy patients and their caregivers using two new tools:

Materials & Methods:
A descriptive study was conducted on a sample of adult ostomy patients and caregivers in the Dept. of Urology (San Raffaele Hospital, Milan), from Jan. to Sept. 2018. The patient questionnaire was composed of a sociodemographic-clinical data form, to collect information about demographics, living, family and work conditions, clinical information about ostomy, the OSCI, and the Stoma Care Quality of life scale (SQoL). The caregiver questionnaire was composed of a sociodemographic-clinical data form, to collect information about demographics, living, family and work conditions, and the CC-OSCI.

Results:
Out of 107 questionnaires, 105 were returned and analyzed (98.13%). The considered sample was composed of 105 patients (average age: 68 y/o; mostly male) and 75 caregivers (180 subjects). In almost the 82% of cases, patients did not live alone; the 46.67% had a colostomy. The predominant causes of stoma creation were oncological (90.4%). The average time of stoma creation was 22.35 months (range 1-60). Almost half of the sample declared to be autonomous in stoma management (48.57%). Regarding the caregivers, the 76% was composed by women (average age: 59 y/o), mainly husbands/wives/partners (65.33%), the 73.33% living with the patient. The average time spent on caregiving was about 19 hours/week. The 31.43% of patients’ sample had one or more complications and the 25.71% had readmissions.

Conclusions:
The characteristics of our sample appear similar to ostomy patients described in literature. Each scale reaches a similar average score towards patients; the scores indicated a good level of SC and an average level of quality of life. The OSCI and CC-OSCI are two important tools for support nurses in their practice. An objective assessment of ostomy patients’ and caregiver’s SC levels is an essential starting point willing to guarantee an evidence-based educational support. This might contribute a significant reduction of readmissions and ostomy complications.