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Carer's Needs Assessment for Dementia

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Objectives: A variety of interventions are available to support the caregivers of dementia patients. For the purpose of service planning, we developed an instrument to assess the needs of dementia caregivers and whether these needs are met. Another aim was to investigate aspects of reliability and validity of this new instrument.

Methods: The development of this instrument ('Carers' Needs Assessment for Dementia' =CNA-D) was based on in-depth interviews and a focus group. The combined inter-rater and test-retest reliability was investigated among 45 dementia caregivers. For analyzing concurrent validity correlations of the CNA-D with the 'Zarit Burden Inventory' were used. Content validity was investigated by performing a separate survey among 40 caregivers and 40 professionals.

Results: The CNA-D is a semi-structured research interview including 18 problem areas. For each of these problem areas, the CNA-D offers several possible interventions. The relevance of the problem areas and the interventions (content validity) was confirmed by the majority of the study participants. Significant positive associations were found between the total score of the 'Zarit Burden Inventory' on the one hand, and the number of problems and the number of unmet needs according to the CNA-D on the other hand. The agreement between the interviewers was 'excellent' (i.e. kappa above 0.75) in 73.7% of the problem areas and in 69.9% of the interventions.

Conclusions: These results suggest that the CNA-D is both valid and reliable. The CNA-D seems to be able to comprehensively assess the needs of dementia caregivers