

Journal Watch – Family Caregivers/Symptom Assessment – February 2018

Article:

Testing the feasibility of using the Edmonton Symptom Assessment System (ESAS) to assess caregiver symptom burden

Tanco K, Vidal M, Arthur J, Delgado Guay M, Hui D, Liu D, Chisholm G, and Bruera E

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Review:

Strengths:

- Focus on caregiver symptom burden, which is an original application of the ESAS
- Reasonably large sample with 100% completion by caregivers
- Involvement of family members to provide input on further revisions of the tool

Weaknesses:

- Most caregivers had mild symptom burden
- Not all ESAS items were relevant for caregivers
- Single centre study with outpatients with advanced cancer and their caregivers
- “Usefulness” definition represented responses with “completely agree” or “partially agree”

Relevance to Palliative Care: Family caregivers may experience as much if not more distress than palliative patients. Routine screening of family members’ symptom burden, however, is relatively rare. Most screening tools that are available have been primarily developed for research purposes. This study offers an initial step towards the development of a simple screening tool for assessing caregiver symptom burden that could be used in the clinical setting.