



Profiling Family Carers of People with Dementia: Results From a National Survey



Attracta Lafferty, Gerard Fealy, Áine Teahan, Eilish McAuliffe, Amanda Phelan, Liam O'Sullivan, Diarmuid O'Shea



1. Introduction

It is estimated that approximately 55,000 people in Ireland have dementia, and for every one person diagnosed, three other family members are significantly affected (DoH 2014; Cahill *et al.* 2012). *The Irish National Dementia Strategy* (2014) and the *National Carers' Strategy* (2012) recognise the important role played by family carers in the provision of care in Ireland. Care of a relative with dementia can be demanding and stressful, and can sometimes have a negative effect on the health and well-being of carers. This paper presents findings from a national survey of family carers in receipt of a carer's allowance for care provided to an older person with dementia.

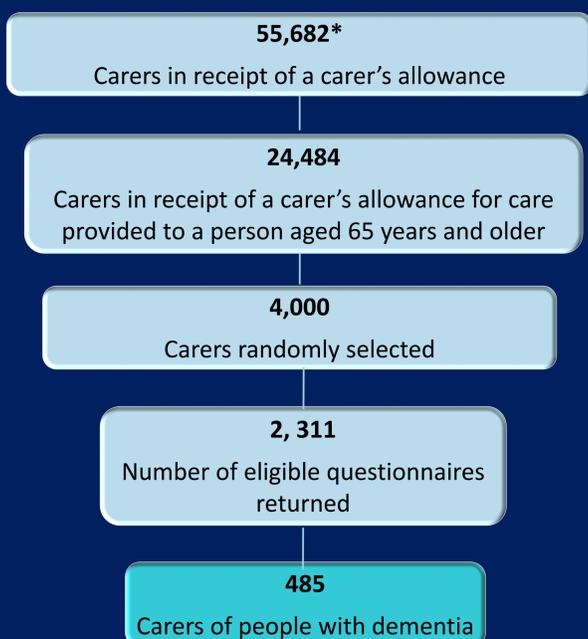
2. Aim of the study

The aim of this study was to profile family dementia caregivers, including information on their health and well-being and caregiving activities, and also to develop profiles of the care-recipients with dementia.

3. Methods

An anonymous postal survey was conducted with 4,000 recipients of a carer's allowance for care of an older person and a total of 2,311 completed questionnaires were returned (Lafferty *et al.* 2014). Secondary analysis was conducted on a sample subset of 485 family carers who provided care to a person with a diagnosis of dementia.

4. Sampling

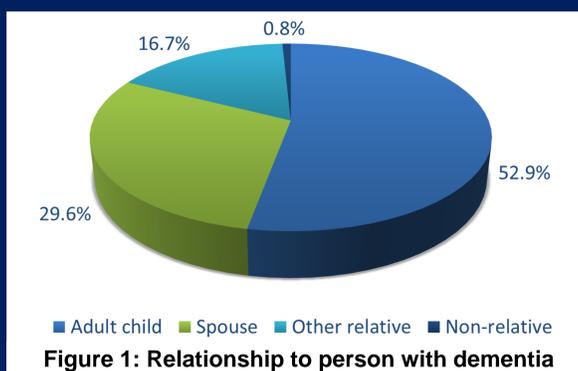


* May 2013

5. Results

5.1 Demographics

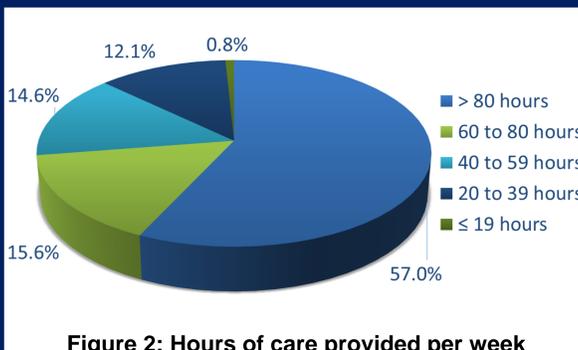
- Carers' age ranged from 20 to 92 years.
- 72.6% of carers were female.
- Almost a third of carers were aged 65 years or older.
- 1 in 4 carers reported having no formal/primary education.
- Three quarters of carers lived with the person with dementia.
- Over half of carers were caring for a parent (Figure 1).
- The vast majority of carers did not work or study outside of the home (Table 1).



Activity	%
Paid work up to 15 hours per week	9.6%
Study up to 15 hours per week	0.9%
Paid work and study up to 15 hours per week	0.4%
None of the above	89.1%

5.2 Caregiving activities

- Carers had been providing care for between 1 month and 50 years.
- The majority of carers provided care for more than 80 hours a week (Figure 2).
- Carers provided most support with housework, followed by dressing/undressing, walking, and taking a bath or shower (Table 2).
- Almost a third of carers reported that they had received some form of training to help them with caring for a person with dementia e.g. manual handling, etc.

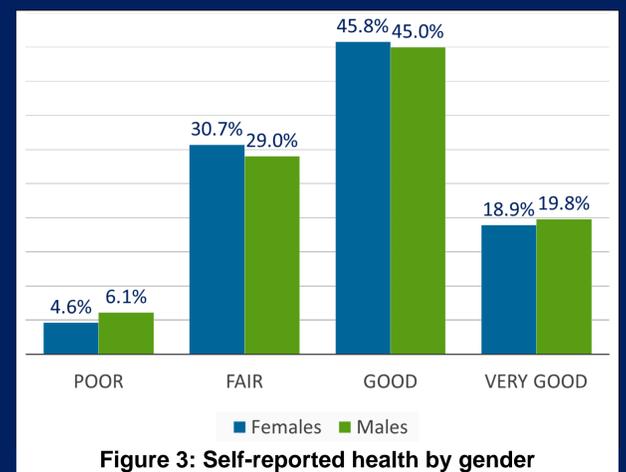


Care provided with:	Never %	Sometimes %	All of the time %
Housework	4.8	10.4	84.8
Taking a bath/shower	14.5	14.8	70.7
Dressing & undressing	13.2	33.1	53.7
Walking	13.6	39.3	47.1
Cutting & eating food	17.4	36.8	45.8
Using the toilet	27.9	33.3	38.8

5. Results cont.

5.3 Health and well-being

- Almost two-thirds of carers reported that they had good or very good health (64.8%). The remaining carers (35.2%) indicated that they had poor or fair health (Figure 3).
- Just over half of carers (51.3%) were considered at risk of developing clinical depression.
- Just under half of the carers (46.8%) indicated that they experienced moderate to severe or severe burden.



5.4 Care-recipients with dementia

- Care-recipients with dementia were aged between 65 and 101 years.
- Over a third were aged 85 years or older.
- Two thirds were female.

6. Conclusions

This study provides important information about family carers of people with dementia, which can be used to inform health and social policy in Ireland, and move towards meeting the needs of this particular subset of family carers.

7. References

Cahill, S., O'Shea, E., Pierce, M. (2012) Future dementia care in Ireland. Dublin: TCD
 Department of Health (DoH) (2014). *The Irish National Dementia Strategy*. Dublin: DoH
 Department of Health (2012) *The National Carers' Strategy: Recognised, supported, empowered*. Dublin: DOH
 Lafferty, A., Fealy, G., Downs, C., Drennan, J (2014) Family carers of older people. Results of a national survey of stress, conflict and coping. Dublin: NCPOP, UCD.

8. Contact details

This study was undertaken as part of a 3 year research project entitled 'Towards resilience in family caregiving for people with dementia'. Please contact Dr Attracta Lafferty on: (01) 716 6565 or email: attracta.lafferty@ucd.ie