Introduction:

Post intensive care syndrome–family (PICS-F) describes new or worsening psychological distress in family and caregivers after critical illness but remains poorly studied within specialist groups [1]. We aim to define the degree of PICS-F within our tertiary referral cardiothoracic centre and map change over the course of 12 months.

Methods:

Caregivers attended a 5-week multi-professional clinic alongside patients. Peer support was facilitated through a café area and a caregiver group psychology session was offered with individual appointments if required. Caregiver surveys were completed including: caregiver strain index; hospital anxiety and depression scale (HADS); and insomnia severity index. Patients also completed HADS questionnaires. Repeat surveys were completed at 3 and 12 months.

Results:

Over 5 cohorts, 23 caregivers attended, of which 17 were spouses (74%), 3 children (13%), and 3 others (13%), with 13 caregivers completing surveys at 12 months. Patients' median APACHE 2 score was 17 (IQR 14-18.5) and median ICU length of stay was 11 days (IQR 8-23.5). Most admissions were from scheduled operations (56%). Severe caregiver strain was present in 4/23 (17%) with changes to personal plans (35%) the most common sub category. HADS demonstrated 13 caregivers (57%) with anxiety and 8 (35%) with depression. Caregiver anxiety exceeded that of patients’, only reaching similar levels at 12 months, while depression remained static (Figure 1). Median number of nights with ‘bothered’ sleep was 5 (IQR 1-6.75) and 77% of caregivers expressed problems with sleep.

Conclusion:

Significant psychological morbidity in caregivers from our tertiary cardiothoracic centre is in keeping with the general ICU population [2]. Caregiver strain was reduced suggesting higher levels of resilience. Future work should address mental wellbeing, particularly anxiety, to minimise the effects of PICS-F.

References:


Image:
Figure 1: Hospital anxiety and depression scale (HADS) scores for patients and caregivers at baseline, 3 months, and 12 months.