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Multidimensional burden, coping, and tech receptivity in advanced cancer family caregivers: A qualitative study

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Background

- Caregiving burden causes varying degrees of interference in the lives of family members caring for advanced cancer patients (Adelman et al, 2014; Mohamed et al., 2023).
- Understanding how family caregivers perceive and cope with this multidimensional burden in the context of Chinese culture, as well as their receptivity to technological assistance, is important to develop targeted robotic support programs based on ACT and help improve their palliative quality of life (Hayes et al., 2006; 2013).
- A descriptive qualitative study guided by ACT hexagonal matrix was used to understand the participants' experiences of caregiving burden, the degree of flexibly coping mechanisms, and attitudes toward nursing robots.

Methods

- A descriptive qualitative study.
- The study was conducted in school-affiliated hospital in Eastern China between July and September 2025.
- Individual face-to-face and online semi-structured interviews were conducted in twenty-five primary family caregivers of patients with advanced cancer using purposive sampling.
- Content analysis was used for data analysis.
- Ethical approval: Fudan University Shanghai Cancer Center (2604-Exp433)

Table 1 Interview guide

Questions

- Can you describe the situations in which caregiving has felt most physically or emotionally demanding?
- How has providing care over time affected your everyday life?
- What were your first thoughts and feelings when you began to take on caregiving responsibilities?
- How do you usually manage the pressures associated with caregiving?
- Are there caregiving situations that you find particularly difficult to face or would prefer to avoid? How do these situations affect your emotions, thoughts or behaviour?
- What influences the ways in which you respond to or cope with these situations? How do these approaches affect your emotional well-being and your ability to continue providing care?
- Have there been times when you repeatedly questioned whether you had done enough or whether care or treatment decisions were appropriate? How, if at all, did you try to manage these thoughts or feelings?
- How has your understanding of end-of-life care changed since becoming a family caregiver? Has this influenced your understanding of being present, the meaning of caregiving, or your views of life and death?
- What matters most to you at this stage of your life? When you feel physically or emotionally exhausted, or when the care recipient's condition worsens, what makes it difficult to live in a way that feels meaningful to you?
- If a support group helped you make space for difficult emotions and focus on actions that are consistent with what matters to you, what goals would you hope to achieve and how would you work towards them?
- Is there anything else about your caregiving experience, emotional well-being or support needs that we have not discussed but that you consider important?

Results

Table 2 Detailed characteristics of participants (n = 25)

Participant	Age	Sex	Education	Employment/occupation	Caregiving duration	Relationship to care recipient
N1	29	Female	Postgraduate	Studio employee	6 months	Grandchild
N2	21	Male	Undergraduate	Student	1 year	Grandchild
N3	35	Female	Senior high school	Hair salon owner	1 year	Daughter
N4	32	Female	Junior college	Unemployed	2 years	Daughter-in-law
N5	33	Female	Postgraduate	Student	2.5 years	Daughter
N6	24	Female	Undergraduate	Counsellor	6 months	Daughter
N7	23	Female	Undergraduate	Nurse	>6 months	Grandchild
N8	41	Male	Junior college	Unemployed	4 months	Nephew
N9	32	Female	Junior college	Part-time worker	>2 years	Daughter
N10	34	Male	Postgraduate	Teacher	3 years	Son
N11	21	Male	Junior college	Unemployed	Approximately 1 year	Grandchild
N12	25	Female	Undergraduate	Unemployed	4 months	Daughter
N13	21	Female	Undergraduate	Student	3 months	Daughter
N14	29	Female	Undergraduate	Accountant	7 months	Grandchild
N15	29	Female	Junior college	Unemployed	>6 months	Daughter
N16	31	Male	Senior high school	Shop owner	3 months	Nephew
N17	30	Female	Junior college	Unemployed	6 months	Daughter
N18	25	Female	Undergraduate	Teacher	1.5 years	Daughter
N19	24	Female	Junior college	Property management employee	>1 year	Grandchild
N20	28	Male	Junior college	Self-employed	6 months	Grandchild
N21	30	Female	Junior college	Nurse	3 months	Grandchild
N22	26	Female	Junior college	Chemical plant worker	<2 years	Daughter
N23	26	Female	Undergraduate	Unemployed	Approximately 6 months	Grandchild
N24	30	Male	Undergraduate	Data developer	2 years	Grandchild
N25	31	Female	Undergraduate	Nurse	1 year	Daughter

- A total of 16 subthemes in four themes emerged from the data.

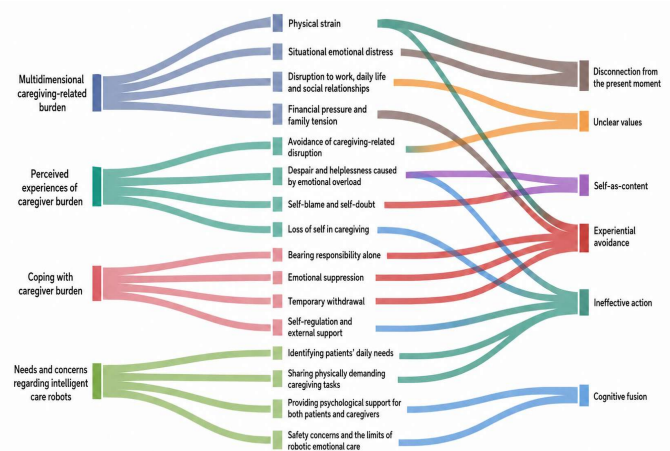


Figure 1 Themes and subthemes via a sankey diagram

Conclusion

- Caregiver burden among family caregivers of people with advanced cancer is dynamic and complex. Healthcare professionals and technologists should develop acceptance-based interventions based on the findings to help alleviate caregiving burdens and facilitate a supported cancer care life.

References

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