

**OP 06**

**Perception of Family Carers towards Dementia Care at a Selected Healthcare Institution in Western Province: A Qualitative Study**

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**Background:** Dementia is a major cause of disability and dependency among older people worldwide. The syndrome causes cognitive deterioration, ultimately interfering with one's ability to perform daily activities. The informal carers (e.g., family members, relatives) play a challenging role as regular carers of people living with dementia.

**Objectives:** To explore the perception of family carers towards dementia care followed up at a selected healthcare institution in Western Province, Sri Lanka.

**Methods:** This study was a descriptive exploratory qualitative study. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of nine family carers, till the saturation point was achieved. Data were analysed using thematic analysis.

**Results:** The median age of the sample was 61 years and they were either spouses or children of the older people living with dementia. Overall, six sub themes emerged under two major themes: (a) psychological adjustment of the family carers and (b) challenges regarding care provision. The sub themes that emerged under the theme of psychological adjustment were satisfaction with care labour, effective coping with the disease, and a sense of filial piety and responsibility. The sub themes, such as inability to manage behaviour and psychological symptoms, family support and other family commitments were identified under the theme addressing challenges.

**Conclusions:** Although a majority of family carers identified their inability to control symptoms related to the disease, the family commitment and support as challenges for the care, they had psychologically adjusted to the situation due to their own satisfaction being a care labourer for the closest family member. Social awareness programmes and social support services may help to overcome these challenges for the family carers.

**Keywords:** *Dementia care, Family carers, Perception*