



The College of Psychiatry of Ireland
Coláiste Síciatrachta na bÉireann



Press Release
26th November 2009
Carers of Ireland: Who Cares?

The College of Psychiatry of Ireland along with the Carers Association of Ireland today released data from a major study carried out in 2008 on family and voluntary carers in the Republic of Ireland. 10,000 surveys were distributed in and almost 2,000 carers responded representing a 20% response rate.

The study was undertaken jointly by the College of Psychiatry of Ireland and the Carers Association of Ireland to ascertain the mental & physical wellbeing of carers as well as their attitude to specific aspects of caring - financial status, relief and respite opportunities, illnesses of the cared for person, conditions in which they care, and caring related training received or required. ***The final analysis gives a detailed picture of the effect caring has on their quality of life.***

"The findings presented certainly back-up our own experience over the past twenty two years working with family carers" says Enda Egan, CEO of The Carers Association. ***"While caring is a very fulfilling and rewarding role, Carers well-being, and in particular their mental health, is an area of major concern as caring can also be a very stressful role when providing full time care.***

Dr Finian O'Brien of the College of Psychiatry of Ireland who analysed & presented the findings of the study highlighted that ***"Over half of those family carers surveyed had been diagnosed with a significant mental health problem, the most frequent being anxiety disorder. More than 50% of the carers are physically and mentally "drained" by their role with 71% spending more than 50 hours per week caring"***

Dr O'Brien explained that to improve their own health, carers said they would need **at least 9.6 extra hours per week** help, as well as better and more flexible back-up support services, especially home-help & respite care, to allow them to have a

break. He continued, *“Almost 60% of carers said they had no time for personal hobbies or social life”*

Mr Egan pointed out that *“adding to this stress are the threats of cutbacks to carers payments and services in the upcoming budget and in particular the very possible termination of the half rate carers allowance for new applicants. Family carers are already experiencing reduction in home help hours and vital support services across the country and simply cannot absorb any further cutbacks”*.

In making recommendations Dr O’Brien stressed that *“there is a need for a new legal and social framework for dynamic assessment of carers’ needs according to their circumstances as well as improved psychological support for them”*. An improved awareness among health professionals regarding issues of carers’ health and the setting up of a centralised ‘information hub’ detailing all available services with social & practical support for carers were also recommended.

We are appealing to Minister Hanafin and the Government to give serious and full consideration to the findings of today’s report especially in the context of framing Budget 2010 and to ensure that essential services and supports such as the half rate carers allowance are not reduced or discontinued.

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For a copy of the full report and the summary booklet please contact:

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