

Poor health care experiences lead caregivers to self-medicate, study shows

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Caregivers need care, too. And now, researchers from Japan have found that their experience with health care professionals while caring for someone else affects their own health care choices.

In a study published recently in *Research in Social and Administrative*

Pharmacy, researchers from the University of Tsukuba found that caregivers are more likely to take [personal care](#) into their own hands, by self-medicating, especially when their interactions with professionals are less positive.

The research team examined family caregivers' self-medication habits and statistically paired them with the results of a questionnaire on their experiences with interprofessional [health care](#). This form of health care, being advanced in Japan, provides a comprehensive approach involving physicians and nurses as well as therapists and care managers—essentially all professionals involved in providing care. Caregivers, naturally, witness and take part in the care. The study found this can impact their own medication choices.

"Community-dwelling adult patients and caregivers in Japan interact with a range of [health care professionals](#), but manage the balance of prescribed medications, OTC, supplements, and so on themselves," says professor Shoichi Masumoto, lead author of the study.

"This means they need to have good interactions with those professionals for optimal trust and care. We surveyed care providers of patients with [chronic conditions](#), and we found 34.4% of them self-medicate, but those who had positive experiences with interprofessional care were less likely to do so."

The study participants were aged 40–74 and living in a region about 100 km (~62 miles) northeast of central Tokyo. All were caring for someone who had been on long-term care insurance for at least one year. These caregivers answered questions on their use of non-prescription medications—including OTC drugs and supplements—in the previous two weeks. Then they responded to a questionnaire on their experience with health care professionals and personally providing care. The research team analyzed the data for relations and found higher self-

medication among those who reported less-desirable experiences with health care professionals.

"Interprofessional care providers don't just need to look out for their patients' health," says professor Masumoto, "they need to monitor the patients' caregivers' health and give appropriate guidance on self-medication."

With general aging of the population, and rising number of family caregivers, [caregiver](#) health and support become more important. Since their experience with interprofessional health care can directly affect their medical choices and action, health care professionals should interact with them more wisely and passionately. Further studies can examine other groups of caregivers, such as younger and older caregivers, in pursuit of optimal care both for the [caregivers](#) and the patients.

More information: Shoichi Masumoto et al, Association between experience of interprofessional care and self-medication among family caregivers: A cross-sectional study, *Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.sapharm.2023.01.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sapharm.2023.01.005)

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