

Gerontology: September 26, 2012

Family Caregiving

Who becomes a family caregiver?

- Son 6%
- Daughters 29%
- Husbands 18%
- Wives 30%
- Other 17%

Profile of Caregiving

- Spouses are often the primary caregivers
- Next adult offspring, specifically women (over 75%)
 - Parents prefer same-sex caregivers
- For every person in a nursing home, 2 or more elderly cared for by family.
- Caregiving last ~ 5-7 years or more
- Spring 6-10 hours or as much as 35 hours/week

Informal Caregiving: Providing help and assistance to relatives or friends who are unable to provide for themselves.

Characteristics of Caregivers

- Two-thirds of caregivers are married
- Age distribution of caregivers:
 - Under 35 years 28%
 - 36-49 years 29%
 - 50-64 years 26%
- Employed Full-Time (~50%)

Spouses Transition to Caregiving

- Most stressful when one spouse has Alzheimer's

Areas of Change:

- Marital intimacy (changes, does not disappear)
- Psychological well-being
- Participation in household tasks (husbands)
- Social integration

Transition to Caring for a Parent

- Reverberates across family relationships

Adult Children experience stress when:

- Parent is demanding, critical, and unappreciative
- Lack support from other family members

Gender Differences in Caregiving

- Daughter provides more hours of care than sons

Daughters & sons perform different tasks:

- Daughters: hands-on care
 - Sons: household chores, transportation, finances, etc.
- No differences in feelings of obligation

Then, why do women provide more care?

- Caregiving as part of gendered division of labor

- Related to earning potential

Work and Caregiving

- 1/3 employed full-time or part-time

What is the effect of employment on Caregiving?

- Often continue to work full-time; just add caregiving
- Greater stress; more work/family conflicts

BUT, greater stress when **NOT** employed outside the house

WHY? Work offers respite from caregiving responsibilities

Alzheimer's Disease

- Most common cause of dementia

Gradual, steady deterioration

- Early: Impairment in memory and new learning
- Later: Lose ability to perform tasks of daily life

Personality changes:

- Apathy, dependency, anger, aggressiveness, & sometimes inappropriate sexual behavior.

Family Stress and Adaptation

Caregiving is stressful

- Chronic stress
- Negative effects on health & well-being

Costs of caregiving:

- Exhaustion, loss of time for oneself, feeling overwhelmed, role overload, financial worry, changes in relationships, etc.

Benefits of caregiving:

- Being appreciated; a new perspective on the relationship; increased closeness to the care recipient

Caregiving Stressors

Primary: Problems related to the disease/disability. Ex) Behavior problems, loss of relationships.

Secondary: Impact of primary stressors on caregiver's life. Ex) Missed work; marital strain.

What is stressful to one caregiver, may not be stressful to another caregiver

Behavior and Psychological Symptoms in Dementia (BPSD)

- Most challenging stressors for caregivers

Most common behaviors are:

- Mood disturbances (depression)
- Agitation and restlessness
- Disruptive behaviors, sleep disturbances, and ADL behaviors

Disease → Behavior Problems

Advice for Caregivers

Gain information about the illness and treatment

- Reduces misunderstanding and misinterpretation of behaviors

Avoid "reorientating patient to reality"

Problem Solving

- Used to manage problem behaviors

- Information about problems

- Brainstorm solutions

Useful strategies for managing problem behaviors

1. Activity
2. Prevent maps
3. Reassurance, comfort
4. Food
5. Reduce noise
6. Treat illness or source of pain
7. Medications

Caregiving Burden

Degree of stress depends on:

- Coping skills: How well do you cope with stress?
- Availability of social support (family and friends)

Role of other family

- Strain on marital relationship; but source of support

- Siblings described as great source of caregiving stress

- Sharing the burden; feeling unappreciated; decisions

- But some report increased closeness

Reducing Caregiving Burden

Respite: Time away from caregiving responsibilities

- Community support could reduce/postpone institutionalization

- Flexible work schedule/leave provisions