Elders with Cancer & Their Caregivers

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Caregivers at Home

- Home Health Aides
- Adult children
- Spouses
Caregivers: Home Health Aide

- Many elders have no children or family
- Often socially isolated
- Dependent on aides for daily routine, meals, travel to doctors
- Impact is enormous – can be positive or negative
Slide of Claire & her aide from the cruise
Caregivers: Adult Children

• Middle aged / “Sandwich” Generation
• Stressed by:
  • Finances/work/career goals
  • Young college kids
  • Elderly parents

“I don’t feel squeezed like a sandwich, I feel like a Panini.”
Holland’s Homilies for Adult Child Caregivers

• There are limits to your ability to change health behaviors and prevent death
• Understand how old conflicts complicate care-forgiveness is a virtue
• Encourage telling stories from past- they are good for kids too
• Help the elder to find a reason to get up in the morning – some purpose / pleasure meaningful involvement
• Concentrate on QUALITY not quantity of life
Caregivers: Spouses

From a loving, frustrated wife:

“"We will be married 60 years on New Year’s Day – unless I strangle him first!”

“I suffer from irritable spouse syndrome.”

Study by Mitchell & colleagues, spouses’ level of depression and anxiety are same as patient (2012)
Heavy Toll When One Spouse Requires care for Dementia Cancer Chronic Diseases
Worries Are

- Patient’s care: Physical and emotional
- Financial: “Can I afford help?”
  “How long will our money last?”
- Social: “I don’t see friends anymore.”
AN INTERVENTION FOR ELDERS
Recent Research

Stress leads to impact on body and emotions

- Vulnerability to chronic disease, diabetes, cardiovascular
  Through immune systems causing
  Chronic inflammatory finding
- Neglect of personal medical care
- Anxiety, depression, fatigue, hopeless, feelings
Vintage Reader’s Book Club

• “Vintage” readers and “Vintage” books
• All over 70 invited; many spouses
• Can attend or call in; lunch is served
• Monthly large print assignments, mailed
• Readings chosen from Harvard 50 classics
Ethel Posner
Jean Appleton
Impressions

- Attendance & High Interest
- Animated discussion of universality of the human condition over centuries/cultures
- Look at self in broader context
- Engaged with others in joint effort
- Has provided a meaningful pleasurable activity
• Led us to study attitudes about aging character strengths and virtues sustain us (courage, humanity, justice and wisdom)

• Developed a book to counter negative social views about aging

• Reports research on U-Bend of well being
U-bend

The U-bend: self reported well-being, on scale of 1-10

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To reduce negative attitudes of society and increase dialogue between generation
Models to Decrease Isolation

- Intergenerational living communities
  Rudolf Steiner Model – Waldorf Schools
  - School children at school share lunch with elders
  - They work in garden, leave wood working, book binding – skills from elders
Intergenerational Acknowledgment:
Grandson, Daniel, age 9

“The Grandma Software: Making being a grandma way easier.”
“Dear Jimmie Holland,

We, 31M have put out a new software called the grandma software. In that software, you have a screen, and when you need something, you tap and someone comes to help you. It is designed for Holland's that are 65-90 years old, and we are wondering if you would like it. If you would, send us a letter or email us.”
“Beautiful young people are accidents of nature, but beautiful old people are works of art.”

-Eleanor Roosevelt
“Older people are the only increasing natural resource in the world”

Linda Fried, PhD
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