
POSTER ABSTRACT**Addressing Caregiver Needs in Community Care**

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Introduction

Caregivers play a critical primary role in a patient's healthcare journey. They fulfill an unpaid role which saves Canada's healthcare system nearly \$31 billion annually. They report concerns about feeling lost in the healthcare system, having insufficient knowledge on community resources, and are unaware how to cope with caregiver burn out. As a result, they experience adverse physical, psychological, social and financial hardships for which they are generally unprepared to address themselves. Healthcare Providers (HCPs) encounter burnt out caregivers daily, however they have limited time, funding and limited readily available resources and knowledge on how to best address caregiver needs.

Aims Objectives Theory or Methods

VHA Home Healthcare is a not-for-profit organization that offers interdisciplinary home and community healthcare services to patients. "Addressing Caregiver Needs in Community Care" is a project that aims to enhance VHA's HCPs' confidence level and access to resources to address caregiver needs. A literature review on best practice caregiver assessments and interventions was conducted to inform the evaluation plan. Four caregivers were interviewed about their experience working with HCPs. HCPs were led through focus groups to discuss the barriers in addressing caregiving needs. They also completed a pre-intervention survey which measured their confidence level in addressing caregiver needs.

Highlights or Results or Key Findings

Themes emerging from the needs assessments were collected and analyzed. HCPs reported that they had limited knowledge and resources to support caregivers in the community. Caregivers reported feeling overwhelmed in the healthcare system; and reported having limited knowledge of community resources. The results of the needs assessment and evidence-based literature were used to inform and pilot the following interventions for the project: a community resource manual for caregivers in the GTA; educational handouts for caregivers on topics such as: navigating the healthcare system and caregiver wellness; and an education session for VHA HCPs on addressing caregiver needs in the community. VHA staff also received weekly "caregiver tips" for one month. Post-intervention, feedback was collected from HCPs for intervention improvements. HCPs also completed a post-intervention survey, which measured their confidence level in addressing

caregiver needs. There appeared to be a 12% increase in overall confidence in addressing caregiver needs post-intervention.

Conclusions

This project led to an increased awareness for the need to address caregiver needs in the community in various teams at VHA. This project additionally led to the creation of new caregiver resources and a more streamlined manner for HCPs to access caregiver resources through VHA's online HCP resource portal.

Implications for applicability/transferability sustainability and limitations

The next step is for caregivers to provide feedback on the interventions, and update the caregiver resources and education session. Finally, the education session will be offered permanently to all HCPs at VHA. Therefore, caregivers will be provided needed support, to optimally care for themselves and their loved ones.