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#### CAREGIVING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH CAREGIVER STRESS AND COGNITION

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Caregivers are critical in helping persons with dementia (PWD) live at home longer, but the caregiving experience is associated with increased risk of physical (Vitaliano et al., 2003; Son et al., 2007; Fonareva & Oken, 2014) and cognitive decline among caregivers (Pertle et al., 2015; Lathan et al., 2016; Vitaliano et al., 2017). The present study examined the caregiver experience during the time of the Covid-19 pandemic including factors associated with caregiver stress, burden, and self-reported cognition (i.e., prospective and retrospective memory errors). In a sample of 56 caregivers of PWD, caregiver stress was positively associated with reports of greater life change resulting from Covid-19 and a greater frequency of care recipient depressive and disruptive behaviors; however, caregiver stress was not associated with care recipient memory problems. Additionally, caregiver burden was negatively associated with ratings of preparedness for the pandemic, but not with availability of support services or the amount of time spent caregiving. Further, frequencies of prospective and retrospective memory mistakes were positively associated with perceived stress, but not with caregiver burden. These findings reveal that caregivers of PWD report greater experiences of stress associated with the Covid-19 pandemic and other facets of their caregiving responsibilities (e.g., care recipient depressive and disruptive behaviors, frequency of memory mistakes). This work is a first step in identifying areas in which caregivers need assistance and expanding the literature on caregiver cognition by measuring self-reported everyday memory performance.

#### CAREGIVING INTENSITY AND PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPACT OF COVID-19 IN DEMENTIA AND NON-DEMENTIA CAREGIVERS

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COVID-19 has adversely impacted the well-being of informal caregivers (CG) due to infection risk, changes to the home environment, and changes to resource availability. CG of persons living with dementia (PLWD) may be especially vulnerable due to the intensity of care provided. We compared CG activities and well-being among CG who did and did not care for

PLWD during COVID-19. We conducted an anonymous online survey from April 2020-present. Respondents self-identified as 18+ years and CG to a child or adult with mental health or medical conditions. CG answered questions regarding hours of care provision and caregiving activities, and completed measures of CG burden (Zarit Burden Inventory-4), loneliness (UCLA Loneliness Scale), depressive symptoms (Patient Health Questionnaire), and anxiety (Generalized Anxiety Disorder-2). Of the 258 respondents within the United States, 86 cared for PLWD (33%; 88% female; 56±12 years) while 172 did not (66%; 87% female; 49±14 years). Compared to non-dementia CGs, more CGs of PLWD provided 40+ hours of caregiving/week (36% vs. 49%,  $p < .05$ ), performed more caregiving activities (8.5 vs. 10.5,  $p < .01$ ), and assisted with more activities of daily living (55% vs. 73%,  $p < .01$ ). Compared to non-dementia CG, more dementia CG reported CG burden (53% vs. 67%;  $p < .05$ ) and loneliness (7.3 vs. 9.1,  $p < .05$ ). No differences in depressive symptoms or anxiety were found. Results suggest that existing needs of CG of PLWD may be exacerbated by the stressors and concerns of the pandemic, necessitating higher levels of support.

#### DEVELOPMENT AND INITIAL EVALUATION OF THE CARING THROUGH COVID-19 PSYCHOTHERAPY GROUP FOR FAMILY CARE PARTNERS

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This project details the development and initial evaluation of a manualized psychotherapy support group for family care partners of persons living with dementia, specially designed to address pandemic-related stressors. The authorship team, consisting of clinical geropsychologists, developed a treatment manual based on existing protocols, such as: cognitive behavioral therapy for pandemic-related stress, grief management and ambiguous loss, and caregiver family therapy. The resulting 8-week Caring Through COVID-19 psychotherapy group was piloted in an outpatient mental health clinic via tele-mental health with six family care partners of persons living with dementia. All participants were women and spouses or partners of the care recipient; mean age was 70.5 (SD = 9.07). Preliminary data showed a non-significant and small reduction in depression ( $d = .22$ ) and non-significant moderate reductions in caregiver burden ( $d = .52$ ) and pandemic-related stress ( $d = .64$ ). Moderate non-significant improvements were observed in general caregiver self-efficacy ( $d = .62$ ) and self-efficacy for emotional regulation ( $d = .67$ ). The majority of participants reported that the content of the group was novel (83%) and relevant (83%); the most utilized topics outside of the group were accepting emotions (100%) and challenging negative cognitions (83%). Overall, most participants were very or extremely satisfied with the group (67%). Additional data is currently being collected with another cycle of the group ( $n = 4$ ). Preliminary findings suggest that the Caring Through COVID-19 group may be beneficial for supporting family care partners during the pandemic. Considerations for implementation and future plans for dissemination will be discussed.