

Supporting the Supporters: Addressing the Needs of Cancer Caregivers

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Identify social, emotional and financial risks experienced by nonprofessional cancer caregivers.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the common challenges and deficits faced by nonprofessional cancer caregivers.
- Be able to apply support strategies aimed at reducing social, emotional and financial risk factors for nonprofessional cancer caregivers.

HISTORY

- Nonprofessional cancer caregivers are primarily female, ages 45–65, who commit an average of 32.9 hours to caregiver responsibilities.
- Often, these caregivers are also working at employment outside of the home and maintaining responsibilities for others in their families, not only the cancer patient.

SOCIAL RISKS

- Isolation from people and activities outside of caregiver responsibilities
- Limited time/opportunity for self-care

EMOTIONAL RISKS

- Psychological impact of cancer is often greater on the caregiver than on the patient
- Caregivers set aside their own needs to meet the needs of their loved one
- Caregivers face an 86% likelihood of experiencing anxiety and a 65% likelihood of experiencing depression, as opposed to non-caregivers

FINANCIAL RISKS

- In 2021, 38 million Americans provided nonprofessional caregiving services equivalent to \$600 billion in unpaid care.
- Nonprofessional caregivers' employment is affected by:
 - Leaving jobs to provide care
 - Foregoing promotions
 - Often change from full to part-time
 - Have increased absenteeism
 - Have decreased productivity

SUPPORT STRATEGIES

Oncology social workers are vital in the support of cancer caregivers and recognizing need. Some areas of support are:

- Improved caregiver education
- Caregiver group facilitation
- Caregiver individual counseling
- Referrals to external resources to address work-related and financial strain



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