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Palliative Family Caregivers

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Research Question

What are the available means of social support for palliative family caregivers in Ontario?

Background/Purpose

Palliative family caregivers generally experience greater negative impacts including health implications than caregivers of either long term care or short term care (Williams, Wang & Kitchen, 2014). Compared with a hospice environment, where formal caregivers are available, palliative family caregivers are of particular research interest for me.

Methodology

Literature Review

- 15 high quality sources including peer reviewed articles, government sites, and agency sites
- 5 “non-traditional” sources including videos and lecture notes

Findings

- To advocate for palliative family caregivers, the Canadian government implemented the Compassionate Care Benefit (CCB) program in 2004.
- Researchers advocate that CCB should also allow time off for caregivers in bereavement.
- Researchers recommend that palliative family caregivers use a “caregiver-led approach” instead of a “professional-led approach” in assessing their needs.

Findings

- We should develop more cultural awareness when we look at palliative family caregiving.
- Gender plays a role in palliative caregiving experience. For example, female palliative family caregivers use more transportation services while male caregivers use more pain management consultations.
- Geographical location also plays an important role in palliative family caregivers’ access to and attitudes towards social support.

Lessons Learned

- I identified two common themes navigating through my literature review. The first theme is advocacy for palliative family caregivers. The second theme is the diversity of needs among family caregivers as a result of their culture, gender and geographic location.
- There is a scarcity of literature on the topic of spirituality as a means of social support In the field of social service work. This will be an area of further research and exploration in my future study.

Outcomes / Conclusion

- Through my literature review, I gained a lot of information on advocacy for and diversity among the population of palliative family caregivers. I feel motivated to be a good advocate for this population, especially to advocate for their self-care. I believe it is important for caregivers to take care of themselves, in order to be a strong support for their family and the Canadian society in general.

Implications for Social Service Work

- Social service workers are an important component of the home and community care workforce – the frontline palliative care providers whom family caregivers rely on for support. As the Canadian population ages, the profession of social service worker will need to adapt to growing demand. To adopt a family system perspective that includes both family caregivers and clients is essential in providing support for family caregivers.

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