

**BURNOUT IN FAMILY CAREGIVERS OF TERMINALLY ILL
PATIENTS**

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ABSTRACT

Family caregivers play a critical role in our health and long term care system by providing a significant proportion of the care for both the chronically ill and also the aging. Estimates suggest that there are currently over 44 million Americans aged 18 and older providing unpaid assistance and to older people and adults with disabilities who live in the community. Further, the economic value of the services that family caregivers provide is estimated at approximately \$350 billion annually. Family caregivers, also known as 'carers' are relatives, friends, or neighbors who provide assistance related to an underlying physical or mental disability but who are unpaid for those services.

Family is integral to the care of patients with physical or mental impairments. Unfortunately, providing this care is often detrimental to many of the caregivers' health. While family caregivers are willing to provide care, the burden of caregiving can exceed their capacity to cope. They often focus on the needs of the dying person, neglecting their own physical and mental health. This in the long run results in stress and burnout for the caregivers. This research project will examine factors that influence burnout in family caregivers.

It is hoped that the findings of this study will help inform the development of health and counseling interventions directed towards family caregivers, who themselves may become at risk of needing health care services, and who experience reduced quality of life, depression, stress, burnout and other health problems as a result of caregiving.