

What are you doing about caregiver stress?

Are you caring for a spouse with dementia and experiencing any of the following symptoms?



- (a) depressed mood,
- (b) excessive anxiety and worry,
- (c) diminished interest or pleasure,
- (d) problems concentrating,
- (e) excessive restlessness or irritability,
- (f) poor appetite, sleep, or energy

If you are, you may be eligible for a study at Baycrest aimed at reducing caregivers' sadness and anxiety. Caregivers must be at least 60 years of age, have any of the symptoms noted above, and caring for a spouse with dementia in the community. Participants will receive 13 weeks of group therapy, and a thorough mood assessment.

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RESEARCH STUDIES

1. What is the name of the study?

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Family Caregivers of older adults with dementia

2. When does the recruitment start and finish?

Recruitment began January 2007 and will continue for at least two years

3. How is the study being funded?

This study is funded by the Alzheimer Society of Canada

4. What is being investigated?

We are investigating whether clinically depressed or anxious spousal caregivers who complete a trial of group cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) experience significant improvements in mood, coping skills, and the ability to manage dementia-related challenging behaviours

5. Why is the study important?

Unfortunately, a great deal more is known about the negative consequences of caring for family members with dementia than about effective ways of reducing caregiver stress and burden. The proposed research is designed to enhance current knowledge about effective methods of helping caregivers struggling with mood and/or anxiety disorders cope more effectively. In addition to providing information to service providers, this research will also inform public policy in order to support caregivers in their honourable and significant contributions to their families, communities, and to society.

6. Who can participate?

Participants must: (1) be a primary spousal caregiver for a community-dwelling adult 60+ years of age who is cognitively impaired and unable to provide adequate self-care; (2) have significant problems with depression and/or anxiety; (3) have normal cognitive functioning for your age; (4) not be abusing substances or experiencing psychosis; (5) have stable psychotropic medication use throughout the study; and (6) not be suicidal.

7. What is required of the participants?

Eligible participants will receive group cognitive behavioural therapy for 13 weeks. Each session is 2-hours in length and participants will meet in groups of up to 8 to 10 people. Caregivers are taught cognitive and behavioural skills for managing dementia-related challenging behaviours and reducing caregiver anxiety and depression. Caregivers will take part in a half-day assessment, consisting of interviews and self-report measures, prior to beginning the study, after its completion, and 3-months after the study has ended.

8. What are the potential benefits and limitations of participating?

The expected benefits of taking part in this study for caregivers in the intervention condition include enhanced coping skills, reductions in anxiety and depression, and reductions in the perceived number of dementia-related challenging behaviours and distress associated with them. The risks are the same as those associated with any trial of psychotherapy; prior to experiencing improvement, patients may experience increased depression and/or anxiety at times during the course of treatment. Care will be taken to ensure that the study is a positive experience for all participants.

9. Has the study been approved by an ethics committee? (please provide details)

This study has received ethics approval from Baycrest, the University of Toronto, and the University of Manitoba. Documentation confirming ethics approval will be made available upon request.

10. How large is the study?

We anticipate recruiting 100 caregivers for the intervention over a 2 year period.

11. Where are the study sites?

Primary recruitment will take place at Baycrest. Caregivers will also be recruited from other sites.

12. Where can one obtain more information?

For more information, please contact Julia Cheng, CBT Project Coordinator at Baycrest 416-785-2500 Ext 3633 or jcheng@baycrest.org

Information Sheet

Study title: Group cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) for distressed family caregivers of older adults with dementia

Investigators: Nasreen Khatri, Ph.D., C. Psych
Corey Mackenzie, Ph.D., C. Psych

Approximately 250,000 Canadians suffer from Alzheimer's disease and other causes of dementia, and family members are most often responsible for caring for these individuals. Caregiving is known to be a stressful experience, with family caregivers at risk for physical and mental health problems. There is a clear need for effective interventions to prevent and treat the negative consequences associated with caregiving. The purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of group cognitive behavioral therapy for spousal caregivers with stress-related mood or anxiety disorders.

If you agree to take part in the study, you will take part in a half-day screening interview to determine whether you are eligible to take part in the study. To be eligible you must: (1) be a primary spouse caregiver for a community-dwelling adult 60+ years of age who is physically and/or cognitively impaired and unable to provide adequate self-care; (2) have a diagnosed mood and/or anxiety disorder; (3) have normal cognitive functioning for your age; (4) have stable psychotropic medication use throughout the study; (5) not have a diagnosis of substance abuse or psychosis; and (6) not be suicidal.

If you meet the study criteria, you will receive group cognitive behavioural therapy, which teaches caregivers skills for coping with depression or anxiety related to caring for someone with dementia. This group will meet each week for 2 hours for a total of 13 weeks, and participants will be asked to practice the skills they learn outside of the therapy group. Participants will meet in groups of about 8-10 people.

In addition to receiving the therapy, caregivers in both groups will complete a 1.5-hour battery of self-report and clinician-administered measures of mood, stress, cognitive ability, and readiness to change, at 3 points in time: prior to receiving treatment, after receiving treatment and at a 3 month follow up appointment. All information provided in the questionnaires will be kept in a clinical case file within a locked office within the Brain Health Centre clinics at Baycrest. This file will not include information about whether or not you are in this study, and what group you are assigned to. The study investigators will keep this information.

Participants in this study will receive clinical services but will not be paid for their time or travel expenses. If you agree to take part in this study, you may drop out or refuse to participate at any time, without consequences. You may also withdraw your information at anytime prior to the completion of the study. All research data will be destroyed by December 1, 2010.

If you are interested, or have questions or concerns about this study you may contact Ursula Wiprzycka or Julia Cheng at Baycrest at (416) 785-2500 x **3633** (email: uwiprzycka@baycrest.org or jcheng@baycrest.org).