

Identifying socio-environmental factors that facilitate resilience among Canadian palliative family caregivers: A qualitative case study

Authors: MELISSA GIESBRECHT, PH.D.,¹ FAYE WOLSE, M.A.,² VALORIE A. CROOKS, PH.D.,¹ AND KELLI STAJDUHAR, R.N., PH.D.²

Presented by: Lindsey Campbell FMR2, Feb. 5, 2014

ABSTRACT

Objective: In Canada, friends and family members are becoming increasingly responsible for providing palliative care in the home. This is resulting in some caregivers experiencing high levels of stress and burden that may ultimately surpass their ability to cope. Recent palliative care research has demonstrated the potential for caregiver resilience within such contexts. This research, however, is primarily focused on exploring individual-level factors that contribute to resilience, minimizing the inherent complexity of this concept, and how it is simultaneously influenced by one's social context. Therefore, our study aims to identify socio-environmental factors that contribute to palliative family caregiver resilience in the Canadian homecare context.

Methods: Drawing on ethnographic fieldnotes and semistructured interviews with family caregivers, care recipients, and homecare nurses, this secondary analysis employs an intersectionality lens and qualitative case study approach to identify socio-environmental factors that facilitate family caregivers' capacity for resilience. Following a case study methodology, two cases are purposely selected for analysis.

Results: Findings demonstrate that family caregiver resilience is influenced not only by individual-level factors but also by the social environment, which sets the lived context from which caregiving roles are experienced. Thematic findings of the two case studies revealed six socio-environmental factors that play a role in shaping resilience: access to social networks, education/knowledge/awareness, employment status, housing status, geographic location, and life-course stage.

Significance of Results: Findings contribute to existing research on caregiver resilience by empirically demonstrating the role of socio-environmental factors in caregiving experiences. Furthermore, utilizing an intersectional approach, these findings build on existing notions that resilience is a multidimensional and complex process influenced by numerous related variables that intersect to create either positive or negative experiences. The implications of the results for optimizing best homecare nursing practice are discussed.

STRENGTHS: Emphasizes the importance of multiple socio-economic factors in combination with personal attributes for a whole person perspective.

WEAKNESSES: Data based upon subjective observations, secondary analysis of data obtained for a different study objective, only looks at two case studies-not generalizable to the entire caregiver population.

RELEVANCE TO PALLIATIVE CARE: As many patients desire to have home deaths, the importance of caregiver burnout is key for successful completion of this. This both decreases the burden in hospitals, busy emergency rooms and decreases overall health costs. By identifying those caregiver that may be at risk for burnout education and use of Home Care multidisciplinary teams can help to emphasize these socio-economic factors to maximize the success of caring for palliative patients at home. This knowledge can also be further translated to inform palliative programs and potential policies to provide care for both the patients and the caregivers.