

DIFFERENTIAL EXPERIENCES OF SPOUSES AND ADULT-CHILDREN ACROSS THE CAREGIVING CAREER: IMPLICATIONS FOR LONG TERM CARE

Marie Savundranayagam¹, Rhonda Montgomery². ¹Western University, ²University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Contact: msavund@uwo.ca

Brief Description of Research or Project: The caregiving career begins within the context of established familial roles such as spouse or adult-child. As the career progresses, individuals incorporate more of the caregiver role into their relationship identity. Using relationship identity to measure phases of the caregiving career, this study investigated whether experiences of caregiver burden differed across the caregiving career and between spouse and adult-child caregivers. Spouses experienced the greatest burden when their relationship identity primarily included the caregiver role. Adult-children, however, experienced the most burden when the familial and caregiver roles equally comprised their relationship identity. Implications of these differential experiences are discussed. **Why is this research important to profile at the Research Day 2014?** Family caregivers are the foundation of the long-term care system and continue to play an important role after an older adult is placed in a long-term care home. The caregiving career begins within the context of an established familial relationship identity between a caregiver and family member with a chronic illness. This typically includes the spouse or adult-child roles. As the career progresses, individuals incorporate more of the caregiver role into their relationship identity. The current study profiles experiences of caregiver burden and depression across the caregiving career. The differential experiences of burden and depression for spouses and adult-children across the career highlight the importance of providing tailored care for these two groups.