

Title: Resilience of Family Caregivers

Abstract: Learning Objectives: Participants will gain an appreciation of (1) the resilience of family caregivers, (2) attitudes and intentional activities that family caregivers maintain to continue on and bounce back amidst life stressors and (3) positive growth that can occur in the face of caregiving. **Background/Context:** Family caregivers are the backbone of the healthcare system. For some, caregiving comes easily, while for others it is a source of consternation and distress. Regardless, over time, caregiving takes a tremendous toll on the caregiver – personally, financially, emotionally, cognitively, socially, physically. This is particularly true for those who provide >21 hours of care per week, or who support those experiencing depression, moderate to severe cognitive decline, aggressive behaviours, or life-limiting conditions requiring complex care. Many caregivers juggle multiple roles, and experience time pressures, financial concerns and childcare issues. Some face deteriorating physical and mental health, social isolation, family conflict, and job loss. Changes in roles, relationships with one's self and the other, and a shifting sense of identity (of the caregiver and the person being cared for) complicate reality all the more. Caregivers often feel overwhelmed with the tasks before them, and have little energy or time to access resources. Resilience is a key factor in enabling them to forge forward and bounce back in the face of challenges. This project aimed to examine the experience of family caregivers – their challenges and struggles, as well as the factors that enable them to be resilient while persevering through hardship. **Design, Implementation, Evaluation:** As part of a pre-conference activity to a CIHR funded Supporting Family Caregivers of Seniors conference held in Edmonton on April 14th and 15th, 2014, three 2 hour long focus groups were held with 23 family caregivers in Edmonton. As part of the focus group, family caregivers were asked about factors that enable them to continue caregiving and strategies that they employ to face and bounce back from life stressors. Focus groups were transcribed and a thematic analysis conducted. **Results/Outcome:** Caregivers identified newfound life purpose, positive growth, introspection, acceptance, forgiveness, humour, spiritual and religious practices, reciprocity and altruistic intent, and intentional activities as being key factors to maintaining resilience and a positive outlook.

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