Promoting Caregiver Well-Being

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History of the UC San Diego Caregiver Project

• Early focus was on the emotional and physical consequences of caregiving

• Science had already shown that stress/distress was related to health problems (e.g., CVD; Hypertension)

• Our project focused on “why” the stress/distress led to those outcomes.
  • Caregivers have more active sympathetic nervous systems (SNS)
  • Active SNS can cause “sheer stress” which can cause higher coagulation molecules in the caregivers’ systems
  • Wouldn’t you know it, caregivers have higher levels of inflammation and coagulation molecules. These put caregivers at risk for CVD; hypertension
Caregiver Rates of Significant Symptoms of Depression

Source: Resources for Enhancing Alzheimer’s Caregiver Health (REACH)
Caregiving and CVD

• National REACH Study
  • > 800 caregivers from 6 U.S. cities
  • Followed for 18-months and inquired as to new diagnosis of CVD
    • Heart disease
    • Heart attack
    • Congestive heart failure
    • Angina
    • Myocardial infarction
  • Primary interest was to determine if stress and negative moods are related to CVD risk over 18-month period.
## Distress and CVD: Group Comparisons

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**Source:** Mausbach et al. (2007). Depression and distress predict time to cardiovascular disease in dementia caregivers. *Health Psychology, 26*, 539-544.
Current Focus of Caregiver Project

• Aid and support the caregiver in learning new coping skills

• 10 years of studying therapeutic approaches to helping caregivers learn these coping skills

• Now, we are focusing on mobile technology interventions
  • Can we deliver effective interventions to caregivers through the use of mobile technology?
• Select personally enjoyable activities from categories; or enter a custom/personal activity
• Select “candidate” activities to try for a week. Each activity has a “personal hearts” rating (from 1-5). The goal is to achieve 50 hearts during the first week
• Each day, participants receive a text (at time of their choosing), asking them to report on their progress for the day

• Text contains a link to their personal portal

• Caregivers check off activities they achieved that day, or add personal activities they enjoyed (e.g., visit with granddaughter)

• The site tracks “hearts achieved”, and every week shows progress regarding moods.
Thank You!

Information:
858-534-9479