

FROM THE EDITOR

THE JOINT SOCIAL WORK/NURSING CAREGIVER INITIATIVE: OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

IN THIS SUPPLEMENTAL ISSUE, I am pleased to present the products that resulted from the invitational symposium "State of the Science: Nurses and Social Workers Supporting Family Caregivers," which was held in Washington, DC in January 2008.¹ This innovative initiative represents a nurse/social worker partnership led and supported by AARP, the Family Caregiver Alliance, the Council on Social Work Education, and the *American Journal on Nursing*. The project was funded in part by the John A. Hartford Foundation and the Jacob and Valeria Langeloth Foundation. The main purpose of the project was to develop a foundation for interdisciplinary work between social workers, nurses, and family advocates to advance family caregiving of older adults. Emphasis is on the identification of best practices and further development of interventions to support this group of people who have an important role in home and community based care, enabling older adults to remain in the home and community for longer periods of time. The project's intention is to reframe practice and to educate nurses, social workers, and the health care community to redefine the client unit to include both the patient and the caregiver. The *Journal of Social Work Education* (JSWE) embraces this partner-

ship. It is a unique opportunity to join with nursing to make advances in education and care and to improve the health care system, including family and patient treatment. The skill sets of social workers and nurses are complementary, and in a partnership both professions can more strongly influence systems of care. As educators one of our tasks is to prepare students for the work world, and each article in this issue has relevancy for this task. The supplemental publication to JSWE was funded by the John A. Hartford Foundation to ensure strong dissemination to the social work profession.

Why should social workers become involved in family caregiving? Reinhard et al. (2008) point out that as America's older population continues to increase in the future, families will remain the primary support for older adults. The AARP (Gibson & Houser, 2007) estimated the economic impact of family caregiving to be \$350 billion. In addition to the economic impact, the work takes its toll on care providers, placing them at risk for depression and anxiety, as well as having a personal financial impact. The well-being of caregivers also affects the care recipients' health decline and increases the likelihood of institutionalization (Reinhard, et. al., 2008).

¹The full symposium report can be found at www.gero-edcenter.org and www.nursingcenter.com/ajncaregiving.

The articles included in this supplement comprise some of the most forward-thinking and relevant scholarship and research that identifies the issues, problems, and needs of caregivers. The articles present information, tools, strategies, and interventions that have been systematically evaluated, which can enhance an evidence-based approach to social work education. Many of the contributions are short enough to be used to supplement lectures and stimulate class discussion.

This supplement begins with Kelly, Reinhard, and Brooks-Danso's executive summary on the family caregiver initiative, which provides a succinct review of the symposium and its purpose. A synopsis of the products that were a result of this meeting are clearly outlined for the reader's consideration.

The lead article is Sharlach's excellent historical overview on family caregiving. Recognizing that the characteristics of family caregivers are changing, the article provides a landscape of the pertinent issues, promising developments and needed policy changes to support this population group. This article is useful as a resource for policy classes in social work curricula.

Damon-Rodriguez's article provides an excellent discussion of competence and how competence links to adult learning and evidence-based practice. She identifies challenges in moving to a competency based education model, along with new ways to evaluate learning outcomes using observable measures. She presents a framework to be used for evidence-based competence training for both social workers and nurses. This is a highly relevant article for social work higher education given the emphasis on competencies in the newly approved EPAS.

Advocating for the importance of conducting a caregiver assessment as part of a thorough and complete evaluation process, Feinberg provides a comprehensive definition of such an assessment. Reference is made to the Family Caregiver Alliance's fundamental principles for caregiver assessment, and a Web site is provided to access these standards. Human behavior courses and practice courses may find this information pertinent for discussions on assessment.

Yedidia and Tiedemann's article presents findings from a qualitative study on perceived needs of family caregivers. Using a focus group design, the authors identify a number of needs that were reported by participants. A rank order of priorities identified by the study group is presented, which provides insight into the most pressing needs of caregivers. The strength of this approach is that we clearly hear the voices of the caregivers, who identify what would be most important to them from a service delivery perspective. This article could be used in a research course as an example of qualitative work.

Insight into the most effective behavioral and psychosocial interventions for caregivers of persons with dementia is provided in Zarit and Femia's examination of programs and services for this population. They provide a useful summary of the characteristics of effective interventions. Design problems on caregiver intervention research are identified as are future research needs, helpful information that could easily be integrated into a research course.

Montgomery presents a new evidence-based practice intervention, the Tailored Caregiver Assessment and Referral, a useful protocol for care managers. Based on caregiv-

er identity theory, it uses a six-step process. This contribution could be incorporated into a practice or research class as an example of an evidence-based model relevant for social workers and other direct service staff.

Transitional care, which involves moving clients from one setting to another, affects social workers in health care settings because discharge planning is often within the purview of social work practice. Naylor and Keating present the results of a review of the literature with particular attention given to models of transitional care, limitations of these tested models, and implications for family caregivers. They provide suggestions for future directions in transitional care. This article can be useful in research and practice classes as an example of a review of the evidenced-base literature and how this review can be used to shape practice and identify future trends.

Smith reports on the various forms of technology available to support caregivers and older adults. Models of intervention are identified as well as the evidence-based research to support such interventions. She provides implications for higher education and curricular needs for the clinical professional as they relate to the use of technology in practice.

Hansen explores the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly and state-funded family caregiver programs. Future policy issues are identified, particularly the need for family caregiver support. This article is a short piece that could easily be used as a discussion item in a policy class.

Whitlatch introduces two interventions: the Early Diagnosis Dyadic Intervention and Project Answers, which are designed to improve caregiver and client decision making

and preserve patient autonomy during the process of client–family decision making. Because few studies and interventions focus on decision making in families in which one member has a chronic illness, these two interventions demonstrate important progress toward the development of practice techniques designed to assist caregivers and patients. With evidence data to support their potential benefits in work with caregivers, this article is a good addition to resource material for a gerontology or family practice class.

It is no surprise to any professional working in health care that programs and funding for home and community based care are inadequate. Most programs and policies are based on a short-term acute care model rather than a long-term, continuous care model that supports chronic illnesses and diseases. Raphael and Cornwell explore the inadequacies of this acute care model and provide suggestions for long-range public policy approaches to effect change. The authors explore economic factors as well as client and caregiver needs that should be considered in establishing new standards and guidelines that support family caregiving. This article will be useful as a case for discussion in policy classes.

Schultz and Sherwood provide an excellent discussion of physical and mental health considerations of family caregiving. Using a stress-coping model as a theoretical framework, the article explores positive and negative effects of caregiving and predictors of health effects. This article would fit nicely as a resource for human behavior courses and health, mental health, and gerontology electives.

The article by Given, Sherwood, and Given is another excellent resource for practice

classes. The authors discuss assessment and interventions as they relate to care demands. Several intervention models are presented and critiqued.

A call for leadership is highlighted in Levine's article. Written from the caregiver's perspective, this personal story takes the reader through the problems and perils Levine encountered in caring for her husband and provides a case study that can be used in the class room. Recommendations are made for care, policy, and curriculum changes.

Lewis provides a summary of the discussion and recommendations that came out of the working invitational symposium on family caregiving. This article and the content in the executive summary provide a good synopsis of the work of the participants that occurred over a 2-day period. Both documents cover the group's thoughtful deliberations and suggestions for change that must take place for caregivers to receive the support so desperately needed.

Finally, Hooyman discusses the implications of the symposium recommendations for the continuum of social work education and the importance of the development of competencies for practice with family caregivers. Referring to the lessons learned from other Hartford-funded curriculum development projects, she outlines the challenges to adopting the symposium's recommendations and offers proven strategies for success.

The lessons learned from the articles contained in this special supplement can be useful for social work programs, instructors, scholars, and students as resource material to use in the classroom or for class assignments.

The supplement represents a union between practice and education, a necessary combination for an evidence-based approach to learning. Whatever special population group students choose to work with in their careers, as professional social workers they will encounter caregivers. As educators we have a responsibility to ensure that our curriculum and course resources are relevant for future practice. We hope this supplemental issue will assist in broadening the understanding of the challenges that individual caregivers face daily as well as identify changes that need to be addressed from programmatic and policy standpoints. Our call to action is to use this information to inform the next generation of social workers across the continuum of social work education, so that our profession can become more responsive to this critical area of need in society. We have the opportunity to advance the caregiver agenda. Can social work education rise to the occasion and meet the challenge?

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