



Are You Experiencing Caregiver Burden?

by Elizabeth Gonzalez, Ph.D. R.N., C.S., Associate Professor, School of Nursing, Drexel University, Hartford Foundation Scholar

According to Rosalyn Carter, “There are four kinds of people in the world: those who have been Caregivers, those who are currently Caregivers, those who will become Caregivers, and those who need Caregivers.” In the United States, it is estimated that 50 million people per year are actively involved in caregiving; assuming the roles of service provider, companion, advocate, and decision-maker. That number is expected to rise significantly as baby boomers live longer in the community. Of the 50 million people providing care, family Caregivers provide approximately 80% of the required personal care services.¹

Becoming an informal (unpaid) Caregiver is a transition that requires a restructuring of a person’s goals, daily activities, and responsibilities. The transition has been described as “crossing a threshold whose other side is unexplored,” “drifting into the role,” “the point at which concern, visiting, and helping out become an unexpected career.”²

Studies have shown that rewards and satisfaction co-exist with the stresses and strains of caring for a loved one. Caregiving can be time-consuming and difficult: it can generate conflicts between family responsibilities, maintaining employment, and finding time for pleasurable activities. Constantly trying to handle multiple and often conflicting responsibilities can generate feelings of resentment and “compassion fatigue.” These

(Continued on page 2)

New Website for Sandwich Generationers

by Fiona Middleton, M.S.M., VP GSC

Your Veterans Disability Benefits

by Benjamin Garcia, Pres., PVA of Arizona

Adults who are ‘sandwiched’ between caring for older parents and who still have children living at home are now being honored annually in June. Sandwich Generation Month, the official commemoration month recognized by Chase’s Calendar of Events, was founded and primarily sponsored by *GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE*.

The commemorative month’s official website, www.SandwichGenerationMonth.org offers a plethora of tools and resources to help both family Caregivers and community organizations.

The Café Meet other family Caregivers in this on-line social network. Share stories, offer or seek advice, and get connected to others who share similar experiences. At www.SandwichGenerationMonth.org, the Café is always open

Personal Living Equipment Donor Closet Listing and Locator If you or a family member need or wish to donate a wheelchair, crutches, transfer boards or other types of durable medical equipment, this on-line locator

(Continued on page 2)

As we mark the fifth anniversary of the Iraq War, there are more than 23.5 million veterans living in the United States. Many of these veterans and their wives, nearly an estimated 2 million, may not know they qualify for disability benefits – or they may be reluctant to ask for the assistance. Widows are perhaps the hardest hit: it is estimated that only 1 in 7 who are eligible receive the available benefit.¹

The VA offers three disability benefits in addition to traditional medical and home care benefits: Disability Compensation, the Disability Pension Benefit, and aid and attendance. If a veteran was injured or

(Continued on page 3)

Special points of interest:

- Pg. 2 IRS Rebate Scams
- Pg. 3 The Healing Power of Music
- Pg. 3 Thought To Speech Interface for PALS

(Continued from page 1)



feelings are referred to as “burden”. Caregivers may experience burden when the care recipient’s needs for care increase, when there is lack of support, when financial resources are drained, or when Caregivers do not have time for themselves. The experience of burden can adversely affect the Caregiver’s health status.

However, the effects of caregiving are not the same for all Caregivers. It has been suggested that some Caregivers are more vulnerable to burden and poor health because of advanced age, employment status, inadequate social support, the intensity of the care provided including bathing, dressing and transfers, and/or providing care to a care recipient who lives alone. Caring for a loved one with low levels of social support has been directly linked to the experience of caregiver burden.

Since caregiving can affect the quality of life and well being of a Caregiver, it is critical that family Caregivers recognize the emotional cues of burden. These cues should act like “red flags” to a family Caregiver that s/he may be experiencing some degree of burden. Emotional cues include feelings of anger, sadness, frustration, or irritability. If a Caregiver is burdened because of the demands of multiple care responsibilities, or lack of time for oneself, the Caregiver is more likely to benefit from in-home services that will directly provide the recipient with assistance and give the Caregiver respite to attend to her/his own needs. In contrast, a Caregiver who is most stressed because s/he believes the demands made by the care recipient are excessive may best be helped by learning more about the disease process, the family member’s level of dependency, and appropriate levels of support.

Caregiving can give rise to new skills, strengths, experiences, and relationships. These outcomes are much more frequent if family Caregivers recognize the signs of Caregiver burden early and seek the appropriate type of assistance. If you would like to answer a few questions to determine if you are experiencing caregiver burden, we have included a short questionnaire at www.CaringTimes.org that may help you decide whether to seek assistance now.

References:

1. Thompson, L., Long-term care: Support for family Caregivers [Issue Brief]. Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 2004.
2. Lund, M. (2005) Caregiver, Take Care. *Geriatric Nursing*, 26(3), 152-153.

(Continued from page 1)

will help you to identify donor closets in your area. Non-profit organizations with donor closets may list them for free on this site.

Visit the Library Read articles, watch videos, and find important information about the sandwich generation, caring for a family member, and tips for coping.

Events Learn about an event in your area or host an event in your own community. Download the free Planners Toolkit for information on how to put together the perfect Sandwich Generation Month event.

Today, one in eight Americans is part of the sandwich generation. Another seven million people are long-distance caregivers. For more information or helpful tools, please visit www.SandwichGenerationMonth.org.



New IRS Rebate Check Phone and Email Scams Have Started

The IRS is warning adults about new scams designed to obtain individual’s personal information. The scams focus on the soon to be released rebate checks that will be mailed to 130 million households in May 2008.

Thieves are using the rebate checks as bait to obtain personal bank and credit information over the phone and via email. For example, identity thieves are calling to tell adults that his/her check was mailed but not cashed. Or they send an email that falsely claims to come from the IRS. Individuals are directed to click on a link to an email claim form. The calls and forms ask for personal bank account and credit card information.

If you receive a questionable email, forward it to the IRS at www.phishing@irs.gov, a mailbox set up for this purpose. You can also notify the IRS of suspicious calls at that address also. Be **very** cautious about giving out any personal information over the phone or the internet. Contact the IRS directly with any questions you have.

(Continued from page 1)

contracted a disease while on active duty, or if active duty exacerbated an existing injury or disease, s/he may qualify for disability compensation. The amount of compensation varies annually based on the veteran's degree of disability and his/her number of dependants. The Disability Pension Benefit, which is less well known, pays a pension to veterans who served during a period of war and have a disability that prevents him/her from working. You do not have to have a service-connected disability to qualify. The pension is also available to surviving spouses and children. You will need to meet the following requirements to be eligible for disability benefits:

- You must have an honorable or general discharge
- If your service was prior to 9/7/80, you must have served 90 days of active duty (one day during a period of war); if you enlisted after 9/7/80, you must have served 24 months or the full period of your assignment
- You must be permanently and totally disabled and "housebound" or age 65 or older.
- Your annual income must be below the yearly limit called the Maximum Annual Pension Rate (MAPR) ²

The amount of your pension benefit will depend on your income and applicants must have less than \$80,000 in assets excluding your home and car. You can apply on line at <http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp>

Veterans and their wives may also qualify for Aid and Attendance benefits in addition to the amount they receive under the Disability Pension Benefit. This benefit is for veterans who need the help of an attendant on a regular basis to assist with activities-of-daily-living. Blindness and residing in a nursing home or assisted living facility will also qualify. In addition to the above requirements, you will need to complete statements of income and net worth, provide proof of out-of-pocket medical costs, and provide a medical evaluation by a physician that documents your current medical condition. Veterans who qualify for benefits may also qualify for free medications, medical equipment, hearing aids and incontinence supplies.³ Once you file the proper forms with your local/regional VA Administration, allow several months (4-7) for the forms to be processed. Benefits accrue from the filing date.

To learn more about the benefits for which you may qualify, contact one of the 61 Paralyzed Veterans of America National Service offices and speak with an Officer. To find an office near you, visit http://www.pva.org/site/PageServer?pagename=memb_chapters.

You can also find additional information at www.CaringTimes.org where you can also email me with your questions.

¹ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2007) Retrieved March 20, 2008 from <http://www1.va.gov/opa/fact/amwars.asp>.

² ElderLawNet. (2007) Retrieved February 20, 2008 from http://www.elderlawanswers.com/elder_info/elder_article.asp?id=5129. Currently rates are available at <http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Rates/special1.htm>

³ VeteranAid.org. (2007) Retrieved February 20, 2008 from <http://www.veteranaid.org/eligibility.php>.

Oliver Sacks, a famed neurologist, has studied the role of music in the brain and the healing process. Sacks explains, "For people with Alzheimer's disease, music incites recall, bringing back the past like nothing else. I met with a gentleman who had had Alzheimer's for 40 years. He had lost the story of his own life, his autobiography, but he had been a musician and could perform beautifully. Our meeting included many songs. This ability to perform music is stored through a process called procedural memory in the more primitive parts of the brain including the cerebellum and basil ganglia. These parts of the brain remain available for life even when the cortex is destroyed. I think of them as a treasure house. Through music, people with advanced Alzheimer's can recall emotions, scenes and memories they have lost. It's enormously powerful."¹

You can learn more about the healing powers of music in Dr. Sack's new book, *Musicophilia: Tales of Music and The Brain*.

¹ Retrieved April 2, 2008 from http://fora.tv/2007/10/21/Oliver_Sacks_Musicophilia.

Thought To Speech Interface Gives Voice To Those Who Cannot Speak

Individuals with ALS reach a point in the disease process where they cannot speak. This experience is referred to as being, "shut-in." The person can understand what people are saying and can formulate thoughts in response, but cannot vocalize the thoughts. New technology that captures neurological information in the brain and translates it into speech holds promise for people with ALS at this stage in their illness.

Developed by Ambient Corporation, the new technology currently recognizes 150 words. The technology converts deliberate nerve impulses that precede vocalization into digital information that is turned into

(Continued on page 4)



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Voice To Those Who Cannot Speak *continued...*

synthesized speech. The technology is in its infancy but holds great promise for individuals who have lost their ability to communicate. The technology will be made available to PALS later this year.¹

¹ Retrieved March 14, 2008 from <http://www.informationweek.com/shared/printableArticleSrc.jhtml?articleID=206903532>.

CARING TIMES© and Its Companion Web Page Services



GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE

The **CARING TIMES**© newsletter and its companion website are a service GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE offers to Clients, family caregivers, and professionals who care for older adults and individuals living with a disability. Experts in gerontology keep you current with helpful articles, legislative updates, tips on caregiving, news about organizations and more.

- ◆ Welcoming A Caregiver Into Your Home
- ◆ Preventing Caregiver Burnout
- ◆ Tax Related Issues
- ◆ Legal Documents: POA and Living Wills
- ◆ Dementia: The Disease and New Hope for Treatment, Parts I and II
- ◆ Home and Community Based Care: What Consumers Want And Need

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subscription is **FREE!**

On-line Caregiving Resources

Our website (www.CaringTimes.org) includes a resource center that is designed to help make it easier for you to care for your loved ones in the home. At this site, you will have access to past newsletters, articles about elder care and disability issues, direct access to experts who you can talk with about your personal issues and concerns, and links to national organizations that offer support to family Caregivers. Check the website each month for the latest information. Here are some of the features that are currently posted:

- ◆ A brochure to prevent falls at home