

ACS Cancer Conference 2025

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The Lived Experiences of Family Cancer Caregivers: The Impact of Supportive Services

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Presenter Disclosure Information

Nothing to disclose

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Abstract Overview

- The American Cancer Society reported 1,918,030 new cancer diagnosis in the United States (Siegel, et al., 2023).
- With the increase in cancer diagnosis, families are called upon to step into a caregiving role.
- The caregiver is impacted physically, mentally, financially, socially, which leads to caregiver burden.
- Medical staff focus on the patient and the caregiver is often invisible. Their needs are not discussed, and resources offered are minimal.

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Research Questions

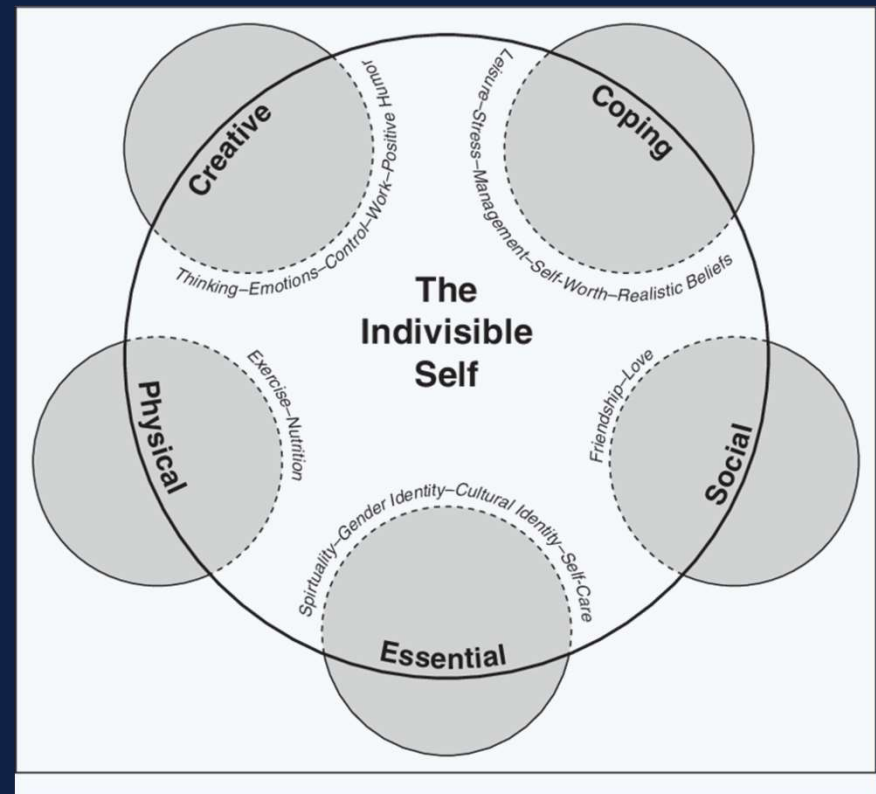
1. What are the family caregiver's lived experience, while caring for a family member diagnosed with cancer?
2. What are the family caregiver's lived experience, while seeking supportive services while providing care?

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The Indivisible Self Model (Myers & Sweeney, 2005)

The Indivisible Self Model was utilized to measure the various domains of wellness for the family cancer caregiver.

The domains within the model were utilized as interview questions with the study participants



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Methodology and Data Collection

Study Design

- Qualitative Research Study
- Phenomenological Design
- Conducted interviews, made recordings, and memos.
- Participants were recruited from Facebook groups, such as Head and Neck Cancer Support Group and the Cancer Support Group.

Participant Demographics

- 9 female, cancer caregivers
- 8 Caucasian and 1 African-American participant
- Median age of the participants 54 years of age.
- Two participants cared for siblings, two participants cared for their mothers, and five participants cared for their spouses.

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Results

- Five themes emerged from the family cancer caregiver interviews:
 - Impact on daily life
 - Challenges of being a caregiver
 - Feelings of guilt
 - Patient relationship
 - Need for support
 - Counseling/supportive services.

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Key Take Aways

Support from the healthcare team

- The participants voiced their desire to receive more informational support from the healthcare team for themselves.
- The participants wanted to be “seen” as individuals separate from their loved one.
- The participants expressed never being asked to be the caregiver and everyone assuming that they can make all the appointments, treatments, surgeries, therapies, etc.

Examples

- “I was provided with binders full of information for my husband, but I was never seen as a person. No one asked what I needed”-Connie
- “No one told me about support groups, counseling or other services to help me with my mom”-Barb

Key Take Aways

- Health Care Facilities
 - There is not enough attention given to caregivers.
 - 7/9 study participants were not informed of supportive counseling.
 - Resources given only focused on the patient.
 - Create a caregiver assessment focused on the Indivisible Self Model to explore the various domains to provide resources, referrals to the caregiver.
 - A healthy caregiver increases the consistency of the patient's treatment and their attendance to medical appointments. Caregiver support will increase if they are focusing on their wellness.

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