COMING OF AGE IN PALLIATIVE CARE: BURDENS AND BLESSINGS OF CARING FOR PREMATURELY ILL PARENTS

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KEYWORDS

Young caregivers, Palliative care, Support services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (100 words maximum)

Caring for a parent in palliative care is uniquely challenging, especially for young caregivers. This presentation explores the emotional and logistical hurdles faced by young caregivers, highlighting their limited time for skill development, and navigating important life milestones. The urgent need for tailored support services and interventions is evident. Through a combination of personal narrative and research insights, sisters Kelly and Karina shed light on the importance of supporting young caregivers and calls for greater awareness and services for this vulnerable population.

INTRODUCTION

Caring for a family member who is approaching the end of their life can be challenging. As primary caregivers, family members assist with physical/medical tasks, make financial/medical decisions, provide emotional support, and advocate within the healthcare system. Young carers face additional challenges in this role. This presentation explores the emotional and logistical challenges that young caregivers face in palliative care, as well as the resources and support that can make a difference in their ability to cope.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Unique challenges faced by young caregivers in palliative care.
- Limited time for skill development and navigating milestones.
- Risk of psychosocial outcomes and isolation from peers.
- Some experience posttraumatic growth despite challenges.
- Urgent need for tailored support services and interventions.

METHODOLOGY/ PROCESS

Sisters Kelly and Karina will share their personal experiences caring for their palliative father. This will be combined with empirical research to explore the impact of having a parent in palliative care on young caregivers and ways to support them.

RESULTS/ OUTCOMES

The presentation indicates that being a young carer is associated with unique challenges. Young carers have less time to develop crucial care taking skills, have difficulty navigating important milestones, and often feel isolated from peers. Young people who care for their parents are also at greater risk of psychosocial outcomes including poorer psychological functioning and deteriorations in family dynamics and communication. However, some young carers experience positive aspects such as posttraumatic growth. While previous research indicates that psychosocial interventions for family members can attenuate negative outcomes, through personal experience the presenters highlight the limited availability of such care, and need for services which cater to the unique experience and challenges of young care givers.

CONCLUSION

The presentation offers a thought-provoking perspective on the importance of supporting young caregivers through the palliative care process and the need for greater awareness and services for this vulnerable population. It also provides recommendations and resources for healthcare professionals in palliative care who support young caregivers in this context. Through a combination of personal narrative, research insights, and practical tips, this presentation will provide a rich and engaging exploration of the emotional landscape of caring for a prematurely ill parent.