



DEER LODGE CENTRE

Making lives better

Research Project Summary

Code: DLC08-102

Subject areas:

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| Title | Effects of Chronic Stress on Caregiver Attention |
| Overview | In contrast to the rich literature on the physical and mental health risks associated with being a caregiver of a sick and dying relative, very little is known about the potential impact of caregiving on cognitive functioning. The relative absence of research on this topic is surprising considering that chronic stress is known to affect cognition, and that informal caregivers are faced with important economic and legal decisions, and frequently undertake a range of complex caregiving tasks, including understanding, remembering, and carrying out detailed medical instructions. |
| Objectives | To examine cognitive functioning among family caregivers of older adults with dementia using an attentional or executive control framework. The proposed research will examine the ways in which stress interferes with caregivers' ability to filter out irrelevant information in order to pay attention to relevant on-task activities. |
| Principal Investigator | Dr. Corey Mackenzie & Dr. Lesley Koven. |
| Affiliation | Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Manitoba Assistant Professor, Department of Clinical Health Psychology, University of Manitoba. |
| Location | Deer Lodge Centre |
| Subject area | Dementia |
| Methodology | 90-minute battery of computer-administered and self-report measures. |
| Project timelines | 8 months |
| Potential benefit | It is important for caregivers, and professionals who work with caregivers, to understand whether chronic stress negatively affects caregivers' ability to pay attention and concentrate. If caregivers are aware that the stress they are experiencing can cause attention problems, they can take steps to address this problem. Similarly, if professionals who work with caregivers are aware that stress is negatively affecting caregivers' ability to concentrate, they can make adjustments to the way they provide information to caregivers. |
| Status | In progress |
| Publications | None as yet |
| Last summary update | April 2008 |