



CARE FOR THE CAREGIVERS

INTRODUCTION

The goals of this section are to:

- provide an understanding of who the caregivers are and what their support needs are
- provide an understanding of the 'caregiver burden' and all that it encompasses
- emphasize the importance of providing care to the senior and the caregivers as a 'unit'

"There are only four kinds of people in this world -those who have been caregivers, those who currently are caregivers, those who will be caregivers and those who need caregivers"

Delivery of end-of-life care is important for the senior who needs such care. Equally important, though, is the care for the oft-overlooked caregiver who will often have an increased workload and increased stresses, and yet may have little support by other family members and health care and social service providers. It is important that these caregivers are supported, not only to help make their workload manageable, but to provide the opportunity to make an incredibly emotional and stressful event as positive as it can be.

Caring for seniors at the end of their lives can be a stressful, but sometimes rewarding, experience for their family members. There are many rewards inherent in family care giving for seniors such as:

- opportunities to demonstrate love and affection for the older family member
- potential for family enhancement
- improved relationships with siblings and other family members
- increased family cohesiveness
- altered perception of life's meaning
- personal growth
- times of incredible intimacy that may come from care giving and from fading death

"Care giving is about you and me--it's about all of us. Sometime during our lives, whether we're the caregiver or the one cared for, there will likely be an opportunity to explore the possibilities of transforming an unforeseen hardship into hope, to discover the incredible rewards and unexpected harvest in the act of care giving."

There are also considerable challenges for the family caregiver who is caring for older family members at the end of life. This chapter will discuss issues related to who cares for seniors at the end of their lives, the concept of caregiver burden, the care giving process, interventions for caregivers, grief and loss and the stress of the professional caregiver.

