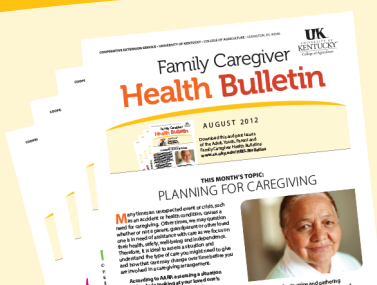


Family Caregiver Health Bulletin



JUNE 2013

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

MILITARY FAMILY CAREGIVING

The exact number of military caregivers is unknown. However, an estimated 275,000 to one million military caregivers serve or have served Iraq and Afghanistan veterans alone. These caregivers are often younger women with dependent children. In addition to the physical and emotional care they provide, they also balance child-rearing and full time employment. In addition to young wives or partners, parents, siblings, children, extended family and friends also act as military caregivers. They play the role of case manager within the healthcare system and often become advocates for new treatment and financial and legal representation. As a result, military caregivers are more prone to suffer from mental health and emotional difficulties in addition to common caregiver risks including heart disease, hypertension,

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You can help military caregivers by offering respite (time away from caregiving to focus on your own health and well-being).

Continued from page 1

lowered immune function and problems with sleep. To help military caregivers, we need a better understanding of who they are, what they do and how we can help:

Who are military caregivers?

People who feel obliged to provide a broad range of physical and emotional assistance for and manage the care of a current or former military service member living with a disability, injury or illness sustained during military service.

What military caregivers do:

- Promote faster recovery
- Provide direct assistance to warriors with physical and/or mental injuries
- Save the nation millions of dollars in health care costs
- Provide crucial physical and psychological support for Veterans
- Devote significant time and effort
- Prevent or delay institutionalization
- Coordinate care
- Navigate through various healthcare, government and military systems
- Assist with legal and financial planning
- Assist with injury and illness prevention
- Encourage healthy behaviors
- Assist with everyday tasks of daily living

The consequence:

- Unrecognized for the work they do and money they save
- Absorb social, legal and economic costs
- Suffer from declining physical and emotional health, including depression
- More susceptible to disease
- Experience little time to themselves
- Pulled in multiple directions, all of the time
- At risk for reduced health-promoting behaviors (exercise, nutrition, sleep)
- Profound sense of guilt and grief
- Susceptible to social isolation
- Challenged family dynamics



- More likely to miss, cut-back or quit work
- Experience financial hardship

How to help military caregivers:

- Provide information on medical conditions
- Offer caregiver trainings
- Help with time management
- Offer respite (time away from caregiving to focus on your own health and well-being)
- Provide council regarding financial and/or job support
- Create networking and social support
- Help each caregiver build his or her own unique set of skills, capabilities and resources

To move forward and help military caregivers, it is important to honor their contributions and sacrifices and support them within our communities in ways that are accessible and specific to their individual needs.

REFERENCE:

Tanielian, T.; Ramchand, R.; Fisher, M.P.; Sims, C. S.; Harris, R.; & Harrell, M. C. (2013). Military caregivers: Cornerstones of support for our nation's wounded, ill, and injured veterans. Rand Report. Rand Cooperation. Library of Congress.

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Health Bulletin

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