

LETTER TO EDITOR

Psychological Capital: A Primary Prerequisite for Health Promotion of Family Caregivers of Older Adults

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DEAR EDITOR

Given the growing trend of population aging worldwide and the rising prevalence of chronic diseases in this age group, the need to care for older adults is increasing, which puts a heavy burden on family caregivers.¹ Providing care to a family member with a chronic disease or debilitating condition can have numerous negative consequences such as neglecting one's spouse and children, tension among family members, decreased enjoyment of life, fatigue, anxiety, despair, incompatibility between couples, reduced social interactions, impairment in fulfilling job duties and personal goals, sleep disturbance at night, feelings of guilt, and financial problems.² Overall, it can be stated that the care of elderly individuals with chronic diseases places the family caregivers in a situation where they endure mental, physical, financial, and social burdens and experience a lower quality of life.¹ Additionally, providing care for elderly individuals with chronic diseases can be a source of stress for family caregivers. They often experience high levels of stress for various reasons, including the challenges of balancing work, family responsibilities, raising children, and attending to the needs of older people.² The mental health of family caregivers of older people has today emerged as a significant health concern. Consequently, interventions and solutions that prioritize enhancing the caregivers' health are emphasized, aiming to reduce the adverse effects and consequences associated with elderly care.^{1,2}

It appears that interventions which aim at promoting psychological capital may have an impact on mitigating the consequences and adverse effects of care. Indeed, research has shown that psychological capital is important in dealing with stressful situations, problems, and stress management.³

Psychological capital is recognized as a positive psychological capacity. The term was initially introduced by Luthans et al. in 2007. It encompasses four key components: hope (a positive view of the future and the ability to create pathways to achieve goals), optimism (maintaining positive expectations in various situations), efficacy (feeling of trust, sufficiency, and effectiveness in actions), and resilience (positive adaptation in response to adverse situations). These four components work together synergistically.³

Evidence shows that the components of psychological capital empower individuals to be less impacted by stressful situations and experience reduced tension when encountering everyday problems. Therefore, it can be stated that these individuals exhibit higher levels of psychological

health and exhibit better performance in their responsibilities. Furthermore, higher levels of psychological capital are associated with decreased job burnout.⁴ On the other hand, studies have indicated that the components of psychological capital can have a positive impact on well-being and quality of life. As such, enhancing these components in individuals can effectively promote personal growth.⁵ Also, it seems that psychological capital in the elderly can lead to the improvement of their mental health status.⁶ On the other hand, as mentioned, the family caregivers of the elderly bear the burden of care and negative consequences, and these interventions have positive effects on them.¹

Therefore, as mentioned, the task of caring for the elderly individuals with chronic diseases places family caregivers in a challenging and stressful situation, altering all aspects of their lives. Therefore, it appears that focusing on psychological capital and striving to enhance it for family caregivers by designing suitable interventions can impact the outcomes of the elderly care, ultimately resulting in improved physical and mental health of caregivers and enhanced quality of care they provide. Accordingly, it is recommended that health providers should consider psychological capital of family caregivers of older adults. By designing interventions that target the promotion of psychological capital, providers of such services can assist family caregivers of older people to have better mental health and adapt more easily to their caregiving role.

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