

RESEARCH BRIEFING

“Barriers and Facilitators to Family Caregiver Training during Home Health”

HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ COVID-19 exacerbated communications barriers between clinicians and family caregivers
- ▶ System-level barriers exist to training and supporting family caregivers
- ▶ Caregiver training, including continuing education, should be prioritized by agencies

▲ OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH

Family caregivers are an important source of assistance for older adults receiving home health care, and Medicare-certified home health agencies are now required to offer family caregiver training. We conducted qualitative research relying on semi-structured key informant interviews with Registered Nurses (RNs) (n=11) and Physical Therapists (PTs) (n=8) from four diverse home health agencies. Interviews explored major barriers and facilitators to successfully providing family caregiver training during home health care. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, then analyzed by our interdisciplinary research team using directed content analysis to identify relevant themes and concepts.

▲ RESULTS

Participating clinicians had an average of 9.3 years (range=1.5-23 y) experience in home health care, an average age of 45.1 years (range=28-63 y). Clinicians identified a range of factors at the individual, interpersonal, and structural levels which could manifest as either a facilitator or barrier to family caregiver training. These included clinician tenure in home health care, clinician/caregiver rapport, and agency-provided resources including additional visits and formal training materials. Clinicians emphasized the importance of informal communication, both within the care team and between clinician and caregiver, in impacting family caregiver training. Clinicians noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced a host of challenges relating to family caregiver training, including caregivers’ reduced access to hospital staff prior to discharge.

▲ IMPACT FOR HOME HEALTH CARE

Home health agencies could consider expanding visit flexibility and encouraging both formal and informal team communication to facilitate successful family caregiver training. Additionally, agencies may consider expanding current clinician onboarding and continuing education options to include practical training on how best to interact and develop trust with patients’ caregivers; none of the clinicians interviewed for this study reported receiving instruction on how to interact with or educate family caregivers. While

some of the factors identified by this work could be addressed by individual home health agencies, a number of system-level factors were also described as inhibiting the delivery of training. Systems-level factors included restrictions on the number of visits,

poor information exchange and expectation-setting between hospital, caregiver, and home health agency, and limited ability to address underlying social vulnerabilities.

WHERE TO READ MORE

Burgdorf JG, Wolff JL, Chase J-A, Arbaje AI. Barriers and facilitators to family caregiver training during home health care: A multisite qualitative analysis. *J Am Geriatr Soc.* 2022;1-11. Doi:10.1111/jgs.17762

ABOUT THE GRANT

The Research Institute's Home Health Research grant is the only grant dedicated solely to the betterment and understanding of care in the home. With more than a decade of sponsoring and providing integral education and research on the value of home health care to the U.S. health care system, the Institute, through the grant process, seeks to bring home health care research to the forefront and sow the seeds for critical research in the field that will help inform better care for patients now and for the future

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE

The Research Institute for Home is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, national consortium of home care providers and organizations foundation focused on improving access to and delivery care in the home. The Institute invests in research and education about home care and its ability to deliver quality, cost-effective, patient-centered care across the care continuum. The Institute is committed to conducting and sponsoring research and initiatives that demonstrate and enhance the value proposition that home care has to offer patients and the entire U.S. health care system.

RESEARCHERS

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