

Applying Caregiver Family Therapy for the Family members in the End-of-Life Care Services

Families provide the majority of caregiving tasks and support for older adults until near the end of life when other health providers typically become involved due to medical or behavioural complexity. Providers can find themselves conflicted when having to balance the care of older adults and engagement with families whose care strategies are insufficient or even inappropriate for this phase of care, or who lack trust in health care systems. Caregiver Family Therapy offers providers a framework to facilitate effective family involvement in caregiving, including the period near the end of life. As elders near the end of life, more intensive care strategies are needed, and families cannot always provide those without the assistance of skilled providers. Family role changes are required to navigate the complex care systems in which end of life care is delivered, yet role definitions about who is “in charge” may constrain that adaptation. Families must advocate effectively for family members when partnering with care providers while still providing hands-on care themselves. This workshop helps providers understand the barriers for effective care in families, and strategies for overcoming those barriers. Helping families partner with care systems effectively benefits the older patient, the caregiver, and other family members whose needs compete for sustained support from the family while preventing burnout in health providers who grow weary from struggles with families.