

SPOUSAL CAREGIVER STRAIN AT THE END OF LIFE: EFFECT OF SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION

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Spousal caregivers who provide care to spouses at the end of life may experience particular risks related to the strain of caregiving. Hospice Social Workers' interventions may be effective in reducing the risks associated with end of life caregiving and provide the necessary support to facilitate the positive benefits of caregiving. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of social work intervention on spousal caregiver strain. The systematic random sample included 136 hospice patients, whose caregivers were either the wives or husbands of the hospice patient. Caregiver strain was measured by an 11-item CSI instrument, adapted from a 13-item instrument (Robinson, 1983), and was administered at the start and end of hospice social work services. Hospice intervention was measured by the presence of a specific intervention targeted at caregiver strain, identified by progress note and treatment plan. T-tests reveal significant reduction of stress between first and final assessment ($p < .01$), as well as significant correlation between social work visits and reduced levels of caregiver stress ($p < .001$). Multiple regression models found significant effects related to caregiver gender, and length of time in hospice care. Implications for hospice social work and family caregivers at the end of life are discussed.