E3-9: The Impact of Project Lifesaver Program on Caregivers of Older Adults with Dementia

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**Presentation Preference:** Late Breaker poster submission

**Abstract Categories:**
Research Interest Groups (RIGs): Aging/Gerontology  
Thematic Areas: Chronic illness

**Abstract:**

**Introduction:** Wandering away (elopement) poses extreme safety risks for individuals with dementia. The Project Lifesaver (PLS) program is designed for individuals who might have a tendency to wander away from their homes and become lost. Those enrolled in the program are fitted with a tracking bracelet that emits a signal once every second and can be picked up for at least a mile on the ground and up to seven miles by air. Preventing incidents in which individuals with dementia wander away is critical because once they become lost, they may die before being found. The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of an advance technology device, such as the PLS device, on family caregivers of homebound older adults with dementia. We hypothesize that enrolling a family member with dementia in the PLS program will impact primary family caregivers’ sense of coherence, burden, strain, hope for the future, perceived health, and quality of life.

**Method(s):** A quasi-experimental study with data triangulation are conducted beginning July 2009. Face-to-face structured interviews are used to collect data from participating family caregivers. Each participant will be interviewed at two time points: commencement of the PLS program enrollment and one month after. Approximately 25 family caregivers will be consecutively enrolled into the study until March 2010.

**Results:** We have 6 caregiver participants enrolled in the study as of October 2009. By the 2010 summer term, all interviews for data collection shall be concluded, and the research team will be analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data from approximately 50 interviews from 25 research participants with two time points.

**Discussion & Conclusions:** Evidence-based approaches to support and guide family caregivers are urgently needed to validate useful and helpful interventions such as the PLS program. Evidence from this research study will enable healthcare professionals and gerontologists to expand services to geriatric population and their family caregivers.

**Abstract History:**
This abstract has been presented or accepted for presentation in whole or in part at the SNRS or other scientific meeting.  
2009, March. Knoxville Tennessee, Poster presentation for the Research Day of Gamma Chi Chapter, Sigma Theta Tau

**Financial Disclosure:**
No, I (or a member of my immediate family) have not received something of value* from or own stock (or stock options) in a commercial company or institution related directly or indirectly to the subject of my presentation.
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