

June 2022

Boomers, Elders, & More E-Newsletter

Monthly Elder Care Newsletter of the Vanderbilt Child & Family Center



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A Message from the Wellbeing Manager

Family caregivers are special individuals who may be unaware of their individual caregiver strengths. Many accept the role as family caregiver because of a crisis. Identifying and putting your strengths and your challenges into perspective will help you succeed at this role and promote balance and clarity in the lives of both you and the care receiver.

Once you recognize your strengths, you can develop an action plan to utilize these characteristics to counteract difficulties and challenges you face in the context of caregiving.

As a family caregiver, you can sometimes feel overwhelmed by the ongoing demands of the caregiving role and caregiver responsibilities. With reflection and focus on the strengths and capabilities you bring to this role, you can take greater control over your experiences.

When discovering your strengths, think in the broadest of ways. That is, any inner quality that assists you in dealing with the challenges of life is a strength. In this way, you may discover hidden caregiver strengths of which you had been previously unaware.

Once you have identified and acknowledged your personal caregiver strengths, you can decide to consciously approach your caregiving role by employing these strengths and applying them to your caregiving experiences and activities.

Recognizing and applying your individual strengths to your caregiving responsibilities can regenerate your life with the sense of power and control that the stress of taking care of your loved one has taken away.

Complete this [Caregiver Strengths Exercise](#) to discover your strengths.

Upcoming Event

Family Caregiver Support Group

Thursday, June 9th

12:00 – 1:00 PM

Location: Zoom

The Caregiver Support Group is a monthly group that offers a safe space to discuss the stresses, challenges, and rewards of providing care for an aging loved one.

Please RSVP for Zoom details to stacey.l.bonner@vanderbilt.edu

Some arthritis drugs may reduce Alzheimer's and related dementias risk in those with heart disease

New findings from the ongoing [Drug Repurposing for Effective Alzheimer's Medicines \(DREAM\) study](#) suggest that certain rheumatoid arthritis drugs may lower incidences of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias in people with cardiovascular disease. While the findings do not support the broad use of these drugs for treating Alzheimer's and related dementias, the results may point to a promising precision-medicine approach in specific groups of people at risk for developing these diseases.



The research was published in *JAMA Network Open* and led by NIA scientists in collaboration with researchers at Harvard Medical School, Boston; Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey; and Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore.

Discovering new drug targets in Alzheimer's and related dementias is crucial for meeting the enormous public health challenge of these diseases. Prior studies on whether approved rheumatoid arthritis drugs lower the risk of

developing dementia have produced mixed results. The ongoing NIA DREAM study previously identified [several FDA-approved drugs](#) that are being tested as candidate treatments for Alzheimer's and related dementias.

In this study, researchers analyzed data in Medicare claims from more than 22,000 people aged 65 years and older from 2007 to 2017, looking at whether those with rheumatoid arthritis who took one of three different classes of arthritis drugs were protected from dementia.

Researchers found that there were no statistically significant associations with lowered dementia risk except among those with cardiovascular disease who were treated with one class of arthritis drugs called TNF inhibitors. These inhibitors suppress the immune system by blocking the activity of TNF, which is a substance in the body that can cause inflammation and lead to immune-system disease, including rheumatoid arthritis. Moreover, a recent large [Genome-Wide Association Study](#), (GWAS) discovered genetic risk variants related to TNF signaling to be associated with the risk of Alzheimer's suggesting that abnormalities in this pathway may be causally related to the disease. Together, these findings demonstrate the importance of generating valid, actionable evidence on drug repurposing using routine health care data.

An important limitation is that the development of Alzheimer's and related dementias may begin many years before a clinical diagnosis. Given this, longer periods of treatment and/or observation may be needed to draw firmer conclusions about the null findings. Additionally, although the researchers strived to address limitations related to identifying Alzheimer's and related dementias in health care claims through their careful study design, there remains a possibility of bias from outcome misclassification.

Full article - [Some arthritis drugs may reduce Alzheimer's and related dementias risk in those with heart disease | National Institute on Aging \(nih.gov\)](#)

Caregiving and sibling relationships: Challenges and opportunities



Your mother has been diagnosed with dementia and it is clear that she can no longer live alone. You feel that an assisted living facility is the best care option, but your brother disagrees. Every conversation you have with him seems to lead to confrontation and hurt feelings.....

Providing care for an aging or ill parent can bring out the best and the worst in sibling relationships. Ideally, the experience of caregiving is a time for siblings to come together and provide mutual support to one another. However, as a stressful transition, the pressure can also lead to strained connections and painful conflict.

One major source of sibling friction is the legacy of family dynamics. Invariably, the demands of caregiving bring out old patterns and unresolved tensions. Past wounds are reopened, and childhood rivalries reemerge. It is not unusual for adult children to find themselves replaying their historical roles in the family, recreating old dynamics of competition and resentment as they vie for mom's attention and affection.

Another conflict can arise when one sibling is in denial over a parent's condition. Adult children who seem unable to accept the reality of a parent's illness and refuse involvement may be protecting themselves from facing a parent's eventual death and their own loss. More active siblings may react with bitterness and anger.

Most often though, discord surfaces from the unequal division of caregiving duties. Generally, one sibling takes on the primary role of caring for a loved one. This may be because he or she lives closest to a parent, is perceived as having less work or fewer family obligations or is considered the "favorite" child. Regardless of the reasons, this situation can lead the overburdened caregiver to feel frustrated and resentful and other siblings to feel uninformed and left out.

Resolving these conflicts can be challenging. But ignoring the difficulties in a caregiving situation can create greater challenges. Ultimately, strained family relationships can impede a family's capacity to provide the greatest quality of care to a parent. Here are some suggestions how families can come together in caregiving:

- Express your feelings honestly and directly. Let your siblings know their help is both wanted and needed.
- Keep family members informed regarding a parent's condition.
- Accept siblings for who they are and expect differences of opinion.
- Try to respect other's perceptions and find opportunities to compromise.

Try to forgive family members who continue to refuse to get involved in a loved one's care. The only thing we have control over in a situation is our reaction. Attempt to work through your negative emotions to take care of yourself and move forward.

Full article - [Caregiving and sibling relationships: challenges and opportunities - Family Caregiver Alliance](#)

Ways to Honor Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month

June is Alzheimer's Brain Awareness Month, a month sponsored by The Alzheimer's Association.

- 1) **Share Your Story** – With so many people fighting dementia worldwide, most of us have stories on how the disease has affected us.
- 2) **Wear Purple on June 21** – If organizing an event seems overwhelming or is just not possible right now, simply wear purple to show your support for people fighting the disease and their caregivers.
- 3) **Change Your Social Media Profile** – Add a frame to your Facebook profile to raise awareness and show your support for the cause. Make your picture one of you and your loved one fighting the disease.
- 4) **Decorate common areas in your community or home in purple** – Decorate your classroom, common area, yard, or home in purple to show that you and your family are doing your part to support Alzheimer's and dementia research and care.
- 5) **Visit loved ones fighting the disease** – Spend some extra time with loved ones who are fighting dementia. In the early stages of dementia, your loved ones need your support as they may be fearful of the progression of the disease. In-person visits are just as important for loved ones in the later stages of dementia.
- 6) **Create a Family Legacy** – Work with a loved one to go through photos, reliving good memories, and maybe even creating a new photo book or video. Spending the time with loved ones, creating a bond, and creating a family legacy for generations to come is a great way to preserve family memories while engaging family members from old to young.

Full article - [13 Ways to Honor Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month \(leisurecare.com\)](http://leisurecare.com)

