

The Important Role of Caregivers



Without caregivers, our health and social systems would fall apart. Caregivers all over the world are sacrificing their physical, financial, and psycho-social well-being to care for their loved ones. Caregivers have their own limits and needs, and without adequate support, many could be stretched to their breaking point. They provide an abundance of personal care, such as helping their loved one shower or get dressed. They also provide medical care by knowing the diagnosis and needs of the patient. In fact, they may know more about the diagnosis than the patient. They also advocate for the patient and provide emotional support.

More than 100 million caregivers provide 80% of care across Europe. In Australia, caregivers are estimated to be worth 13.8 billion AUD, which is more than two times the amount that the Australian government spends on mental health. This proves that without caregivers, our health and social systems would crash, but caregivers are still unnoticed by governments, health care systems, and private entities.

Care givers face an array of challenges. One of the largest challenges are the finances of being a caregiver. Much of the time, caregivers put their own money into caring for their loved ones,

which can cause a serious amount of stress. Caregivers also sacrifice their own health for those that love. This is partially due to being too busy to focus on themselves. Caregivers are also known to spend less time with their intimate family, which makes caregiving difficult for more than just the caregiver. Lastly, caregivers sacrifice many aspects of their job in order to take their loved ones to doctor visits or just simply care for them. They sacrifice so much and so in the goodness of their heart. If caregivers were better recognized, they could potentially have the chance to be even better caregivers than they already are.

An umbrella organization called the International Alliance of Carer Organizations (IACO) was recently created to give a central place for caregivers and recognize all that they do. IACO provides strategic direction, facilitates information sharing, and advocates for carers. Private entities are also starting to recognize the importance of caregivers by providing frameworks through their jobs and offering support.

Take time to appreciate those that are caregivers around you; they deserve it and may need to hear your appreciation. If we begin caring for those that care for others, our health and social systems will continue to improve, which will improve the lives of those cared for. And to the caregivers... you are doing great.

Written by: Kaitlyn Keenan Date July 1, 2024