

A GROUNDED THEORY OF HELP-SEEKING
BY OLDER HUSBANDS CARING FOR WIVES WITH DEMENTIA

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Purpose: Few studies exist that describe the older male caregiving experience, and none exist that specifically explore the process of help-seeking by older men, even though men constitute 36% of spousal caregivers. Therefore, the purpose of this research study is to gain an understanding of the process of help-seeking by older husband caregivers of wives with dementia.

Method: Using a qualitative, grounded theory design, husbands, age 60 and over, caring for wives with dementia in the home will be asked to describe their experiences associated with actions that they have taken and decisions that they have made regarding supportive, assistive, or facilitative services for the purpose of maintaining or sustaining caregiving functions. Sample size will be between 15 and 30 husband caregivers. Constant comparative analysis will be used by the research team to compare coding to transcripts to insure accuracy. Data will be analyzed and interpreted using grounded theory methodology according to Strauss and Corbin (1990). Margaret Newman's theory of health as expanding consciousness will provide a framework for interpretation of the findings.

Findings: Preliminary themes and beginning structure of the grounded theory will be presented, including identification of a core category, antecedents, context, intervening factors, action/interaction strategies, and consequences.

Discussion: Implications of the findings for nursing education, practice, and research will be presented. It is hoped that understanding of the help-seeking process obtained as a result of this study may help health professionals to better provide assistance for elder caregivers to continue to provide care for their spouses with dementia and reduce the stress and burden of the caregiving experience.