



# INNOVATIONS IN SUPPORTING CAREGIVERS FOR CALIFORNIA'S SENIORS

## THE NEED

California's senior population is expected to grow by four million people through 2030 and many of these seniors rely on a family caregiver for assistance as they age. Family caregivers provide physical and emotional support to seniors, often allowing individuals to remain in their home and community. The valuable services provided by family caregivers to seniors was estimated at approximately \$234 billion in 2011, demonstrating the enormous economic impact of this vital workforce whose goal is to help seniors remain in their homes and maintain independence while preserving dignity.<sup>1</sup>

## WHO ARE FAMILY CAREGIVERS?

Family caregivers are spouses, children, relatives, friends, partners, neighbors, or anyone else who provides unpaid care to a senior. Caregiving duties can range from household tasks and self-care to managing more difficult medical tasks such as medication management and navigating the health system for a senior.<sup>1</sup> Often, family caregivers are performing these duties with limited training, education and resources which can add to their emotional burden.<sup>1</sup> Caring for a senior with functional and/or cognitive decline can be overwhelming and negatively impacts both the emotional and physical health of caregivers.<sup>1</sup> Programs that offer counseling, support, education and respite have been shown to reduce caregiver burden and expansion of these programs within the community and health system should be considered.

## KEY FACTS: SUPPORTING CAREGIVERS FOR SENIORS

**According to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's Families Caring for an Aging America report:<sup>1</sup>**

- Nationwide, it is estimated that at least 17.7 million individuals are family caregivers of someone age 65 and older.
- 34.9 percent of caregivers reporting caring for a senior between 5-10 years and 15.1 percent of caregivers reporting more than 10 years of caregiving for a senior.
- Education and skills training can improve caregiver confidence and ability to manage daily care challenges.

**According to the Family Caregiver Alliance:<sup>2</sup>**

- An estimated 15.7 million adult family caregivers care for someone who has Alzheimer's disease or other dementia.
- Upwards of 75 percent of all caregivers are female, and may spend as much as 50 percent more time providing care than males.

## TAKING ACTION

Through a combination of applied medical research, supportive policy, effective advocacy and outcomes-based philanthropy, West Health is working to create and foster new integrated care models that improve health outcomes and better address both the medical and non-medical needs of seniors and their families. The West Health Institute, West Health Policy Center and Gary and Mary West Foundation all work together under the umbrella of West Health with a shared mission to enable successful aging for our nation's seniors. Among other research initiatives, West Health is working to advance solutions that improve care transitions, produce better patient outcomes and increase efficiency to help enable older adults living with chronic conditions, and their caregivers, to receive care on their own terms in the setting of their choosing.

## WEST HEALTH'S EFFORTS IN SUPPORTING CAREGIVERS INCLUDE:

### **Research into Educating Providers to Acknowledge, Recognize and Support the Family Caregiver**

West Health Institute has partnered with the Center to Advanced Palliative Care at Mount Sinai to develop a new series of online courses with associated content including an operational toolkit, expert advice, and webinars. These online courses build on existing course content and will help all health care professionals talk with patients and their caregivers about dementia. All six courses will be available by early 2019 and include topics such as "Discussing Your Patient's Dementia Diagnosis" and "Communicating About What to Expect as Dementia Progresses." Not only will these courses support all health care professionals, but also reduce suffering for patients, prepare families and caregivers for what to expect as dementia progresses, and address gaps in care that lead to unnecessary hospital utilization.

### **Supporting Family Caregivers of Seniors with Serious Illness**

The West Health Institute has committed to advancing medical models that provide quality care to seniors with serious illness including home-based primary care and home-based palliative care. These models deliver medical care in the home to vulnerable seniors with multiple functional limitations and provide comprehensive care that includes shared decision making and caregiver education and support. The Institute recognizes that family caregivers are critical for the success of delivering primary and palliative care at home and, accordingly, we incorporate family caregiver support into our research projects.

## THE VALUE OF FAMILY CAREGIVER SUPPORT PROGRAMS

- According to an article in *JAMA Internal Medicine*, the Resources for Enhancing Alzheimer's Caregiver Health model reduced caregiver burden, depression, and frustration after providing caregivers of veterans with dementia individualized risk assessment, targeted education and skills training, and support.<sup>3</sup>
- According to an article in *Health Affairs, the New York University Caregiver Intervention*, a program of enhanced services and supports for caregivers was projected to save \$996 million in direct costs over a 15-year period in the state of Minnesota.<sup>4</sup>
- According to an article in *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, home-based primary care has been shown to significantly decrease caregiver burden and significantly decrease caregiver's unmet needs after 9 months.<sup>5</sup>



West Health and The SCAN Foundation's *We Stand With Seniors...Will You?* nonpartisan public awareness and education campaign focuses on the specific challenges seniors and their families face in accessing high-quality, affordable healthcare, dental care and supportive services and the cost to the state if these challenges are not addressed. Visit [www.WeStandWithSeniors.org](http://www.WeStandWithSeniors.org) for more information. Keep up with [#StandWithSeniors](https://twitter.com/WeStandWithSeniors) on social media via Facebook [@WeStandWithSeniors](https://www.facebook.com/WeStandWithSeniors) and Twitter [@WeStandWithSeniors](https://twitter.com/WeStandWithSeniors).

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.johnhartford.org/images/uploads/reports/Family\\_Caregiving\\_Report\\_National\\_Academy\\_of\\_Medicine\\_IOM.pdf](https://www.johnhartford.org/images/uploads/reports/Family_Caregiving_Report_National_Academy_of_Medicine_IOM.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Family Caregiver Alliance. Caregiver Statistics: Demographics. <https://www.caregiver.org/caregiver-statistics-demographics>

<sup>3</sup> <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/226705>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/abs/10.1377/hlthaff.2013.1257>

<sup>5</sup> <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0733464808329828>