## Olimpia Paun, PhD, APRN, BC - Funded Projects

## A Chronic Grief Intervention for Alzheimer's Caregivers

## **Research Team**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Research reveals that Alzheimer's disease (AD) family caregivers (CGs), particularly spouses, do not relinquish their role after placing their loved one in a nursing home. Caregivers report increased emotional upset around the time of nursing home placement, with sustained losses over time leading to chronic grief. Chronic grief increases caregivers' risk for depression, suicide, and increased mortality. Interventions targeting the mental health of caregivers have focused on in-home care. There are no documented interventions designed to decrease AD caregivers' chronic grief post nursing home placement. We propose a pilot study examining the feasibility of a Chronic Grief Management Intervention (CGMI) designed to increase knowledge and skills and decrease grief and depression in spouse caregivers of persons with AD within the first year after they placed their loved ones in nursing home care. The CGMI is a12-week group-based program that uses quided discussion as a strategy to deliver knowledge of AD and teach skills in communication, conflict resolution, and chronic grief management. Using a randomized design, 120 spouse CGs (50% African American; 80% female) from 4 nursing home facilities will receive either the CGMI (n=60) or a comparison condition consisting of two check-in calls (n=60). Participants will be assessed at baseline, 3 months (immediately post-intervention), and at 6-months (post-baseline) using measures of knowledge (Knowledge of Alzheimer's Test), skill (Family Perception of Caregiving Role), chronic grief (Marwit-Meuser Caregiver Grief Inventory), and depression (CES-D). The specific aims are to: 1) determine the feasibility of implementing the CGMI including recruitment, attendance at group sessions, intervention delivery, and consumer satisfaction, 2) evaluate the effects of the intervention on spouses' knowledge and skill and their chronic grief and depression. and 3) determine if there are racial differences (African American and Caucasian) in intervention feasibility and study outcomes. We hypothesize that knowledge and skills will increase and chronic grief and depression will decrease at 3 months (immediately post-intervention and at 6 months (post baseline) follow-ups for the CGMI group but not for the comparison condition. The goal is to develop an effective intervention that alleviates chronic grief and depression experienced by spouse caregivers of persons with AD post nursing home placement.