

Cancer Caregiver Distress Unrecognized and Under Reported

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Study Commissioned by Non-Profit Identifies Unmet Needs of Caregivers

WASHINGTON, May 12 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- A national survey released today by The Wellness Community revealed many Americans who provide support to a loved one with cancer do not recognize themselves as a caregiver. In fact, only 20 percent consider themselves a "cancer caregiver," well below the national estimate of 60 percent.

This year, it is projected that 1.4 million people in the United States will be diagnosed with cancer. For most of these individuals, someone who cares about them will take on the role of caregiver. A cancer caregiver is anyone who provides physical, emotional, financial, spiritual or logistical support to a loved one with cancer.

Approximately 90 percent of those surveyed felt they were not very knowledgeable or only somewhat knowledgeable about cancer caregiving. This lack of understanding is also reflected among those with caregiving experience. In fact, more than 65 percent of people who consider themselves cancer caregivers expressed limited knowledge on the subject.

"These findings are incredibly enlightening," said Kim Thiboldeaux, president and CEO of The Wellness Community, an organization dedicated to providing free support, education and hope to people with cancer and their loved ones. "While the cancer community has done a remarkable job identifying and supporting the needs of people with cancer - now there is clear evidence that unmet needs still exist when it comes to supporting and providing information for cancer caregivers."

The study, commissioned by The Wellness Community with support from the Breast Cancer Fund of the **National Philanthropic Trust** and conducted by Lightspeed Research, reinforces what the cancer community already knows - a significant gap exists in supporting and providing information to the caregivers of loved ones with cancer. Of the 1,002 American men and women over the age of 18 years surveyed, only 12 percent had previously received information specific to cancer caregiving, and barely one in three respondents (33.1 percent) could recall hearing about cancer caregiving or caregivers in the past year. Information also eluded those who self-identified as caregivers, with only 35 percent reportedly receiving information specific to cancer caregiving.

"Caregivers give frequently to their loved ones, but often do not take the time to focus on their own needs," continued Thiboldeaux. "This data tells us more must be done to address the well-being of cancer caregivers and arm them with strategies and skills to enhance their ability to provide supportive care to their loved ones while avoiding

burnout."

Caregiver distress is often unrecognized and unreported, especially in the midst of treatment or other challenging variables of the cancer experience. Caregivers provide an invaluable service to those with cancer, offering support on many different levels. This might include making meals, going to doctor appointments, picking up prescriptions or helping their loved one cope with the emotions of a cancer diagnosis and treatment.

"At first I never thought of myself as a caregiver, I was just doing what needed to be done to help care for my wife," said Russ Decamp who supported his wife through two diagnoses of breast cancer. "Looking back, I wish we had been able to find resources that addressed my needs as a caregiver when Linda was undergoing treatment for both her breast cancers."

To learn more about cancer caregiving or for tools and resources, visit www.thewellnesscommunity.org.

About The Wellness Community

The Wellness Community is an international, non-profit organization dedicated to providing support, education and hope to people with cancer and those who care for them. Through participation in free professionally-led support groups, educational workshops, nutrition and exercise programs, and stress reduction classes, individuals affected by cancer learn vital skills that enable them to regain control, reduce isolation and restore hope regardless of the stage of their disease. The Wellness Community also collaborates with academic and medical partners to conduct evidence-based research and provide training in the field of psychosocial oncology with the goal of improving the quality of life for cancer patients and those who care for them. The Wellness Community provides support, education and hope for individuals affected by cancer at nearly 100 locations worldwide including 23 U.S. based, three centers in development, two international centers with 73 satellite and off-site programs and online at www.thewellnesscommunity.org.

SOURCE The Wellness Community
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