

PRESS RELEASE

FSU Professor to Study Best Way to Help African-american Caregivers

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Tallahassee, FL -- A Florida State University researcher has received a \$743,000 grant from the National Institute of Mental Health and the Johnny Byrd Sr. Alzheimer's Center & Research Institute to study the most effective methods to provide skills training and support to African-American caregivers of dementia patients. Love and compassion typically are the motivating emotions for someone who takes on the responsibility of caring for a family member suffering from dementia or old age, according to Rob Glueckauf, a professor of medical humanities and social sciences in the FSU College of Medicine. But taking on such a responsibility often comes with a heavy cost. A caregiver often experiences a mix of seemingly incompatible feelings ranging from satisfaction to isolation, frustration and depression. "Recent research estimates that from 30 percent to 50 percent of dementia caregivers have clinically diagnosable levels of depression," he said. Mounting evidence shows caregiving demands vary considerably for African-American caregivers, who are substantially more likely than other caregivers to perform the most demanding caregiving tasks, including toileting, bathing and dealing with incontinence or diapers. African-American caregivers also spend a disproportionately higher percentage of their monthly income for the care recipient's needs, bearing a higher economic burden than other caregivers. Glueckauf's research will compare the effects of telephone-based versus in-person skills building and support for African-American dementia caregivers on changes in emotional distress and health status over time. The study is a collaboration of FSU, Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Tallahassee Memorial Hospital and Florida International University. Providing support for caregivers is more important than ever in a state with an expanding elderly population, dwindling financial resources and more elderly citizens in need of care than can be sustained through nursing homes and medical centers. "The study holds great promise for better distribution of limited state resources for dementia caregivers," Glueckauf said. "If the study finds telephone intervention as effective as face-to-face intervention, and that's what initial findings suggest, skills training and support can be offered to a wider range of caregivers at substantially lower costs." For his African-American Alzheimer's Caregiving Training and Support (ACTS) research, Glueckauf is seeking African-American adult caregivers who care for a loved one with dementia at least six hours a day and have a strong need to reduce their stress. Those interested in participating should call the ACTS project staff at (850) 645-2745 or (866) 778-2724 (toll-free), or e-mail william.davis@med.fsu.edu. Caregivers will receive up to \$100 for their participation in the study.