



Understanding Caregiver Stress and Burden Among Families of Service Members and Veterans with TBI

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Background

- Family caregivers play a pivotal role in recovery and daily life of Service Members and Veterans (SM/V) after traumatic brain injury (TBI).
- Chronic care demands can reduce the capacity of both the caregiver and the SM/V to maintain readiness and resilience.
- Resources for Enhancing All Caregivers' Health (REACH) is an evidence-based telephone intervention focused on stress management, problem solving, and mood management for caregivers.
- Baseline characteristics of caregivers enrolled in the REACH TBI clinical trial can identify service gaps and inform family-centered TBI care.

Objective

Describe the characteristics of caregivers of SM/V with TBI and areas of needed support and services.

Methods

- Design:** Mixed-methods, waitlist control clinical trial, with Type 1 Hybrid Effectiveness-Implementation approach.
- Eligibility:** Adult, English-speaking, provided ≥ 6 months of daily TBI-related assistance to a V/SM, and reported high burden (Zarit Burden Interview 4-item ≥ 8).
- Data collection:** Baseline survey was collected by telephone or online.

Caregiver Characteristics

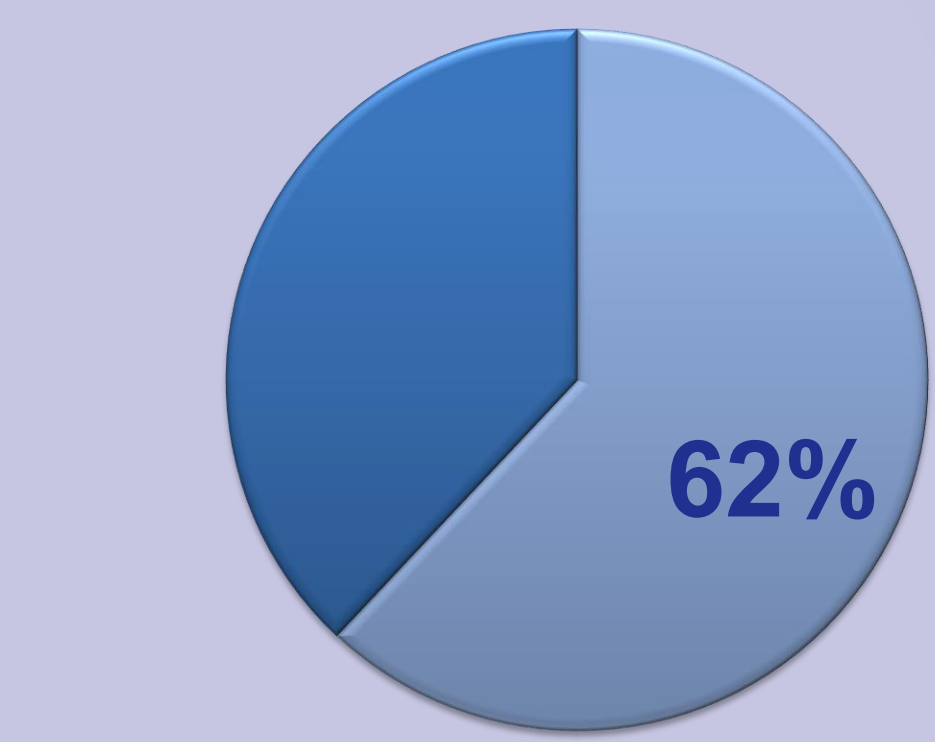
N = 87		%	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Sex						
	Female	95%				
	Male	5%				
Relationship to Service Member/Veteran						
	Wife	63%				
	Mother	20%				
	Daughter	6%				
	Partner	6%				
	Other	5%				
Caregiving Characteristics						
	Participation in the VA's Family Caregivers program	15%				
	Availability of an Alternate Caregiver	16%				
	Years Providing Care		10.0	8.1	0.5	50.0
	Hours/Day Providing Care		15.2	8.0	0.0	24.0
Age			50.1	12.1	28.0	83.2
Measures of Caregiver Psychosocial Functioning						
	Zarit Burden Interview 4-item		10.3	1.7	8.0	16.0
	TBI-CareQOL Caregiver Strain T-score		55.9	7.0	32.1	76.1
	PROMIS Emotional Distress – Depression T-score		55.7	8.2	38.2	78.2
	PROMIS Emotional Distress – Anxiety T-score		57.9	9.2	37.1	75.4
	PROMIS General Self-Efficacy T-score		41.6	11.9	18.7	68.3
	TBI-CareQOL Health Care Frustration T-score		48.0	8.3	33.0	66.0
	Self-rated stress (1-10 scale)		6.9	1.8	1.0	10.0

Note. **Zarit Burden Interview 4-item:** Min = 0, Max =16; higher scores = higher burden; **T-scores:** mean = 50, SD =10; higher scores = higher depression, anxiety, self-efficacy, health care frustration; **Self-rated stress:** "On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being 'not stressed at all' and 10 being 'extremely stressed,' please rate your current level of stress."

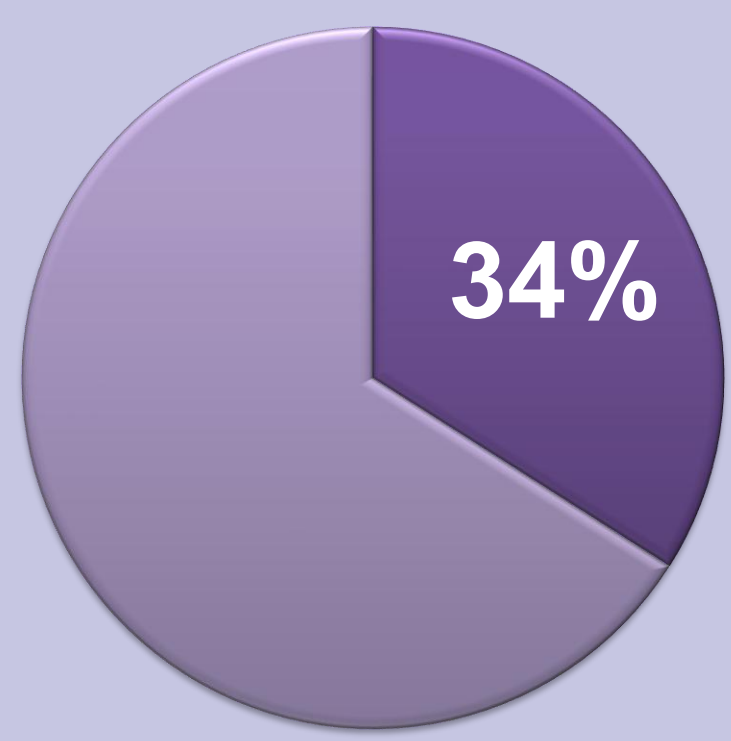
Acknowledgements and Disclosures

SM/V Characteristics

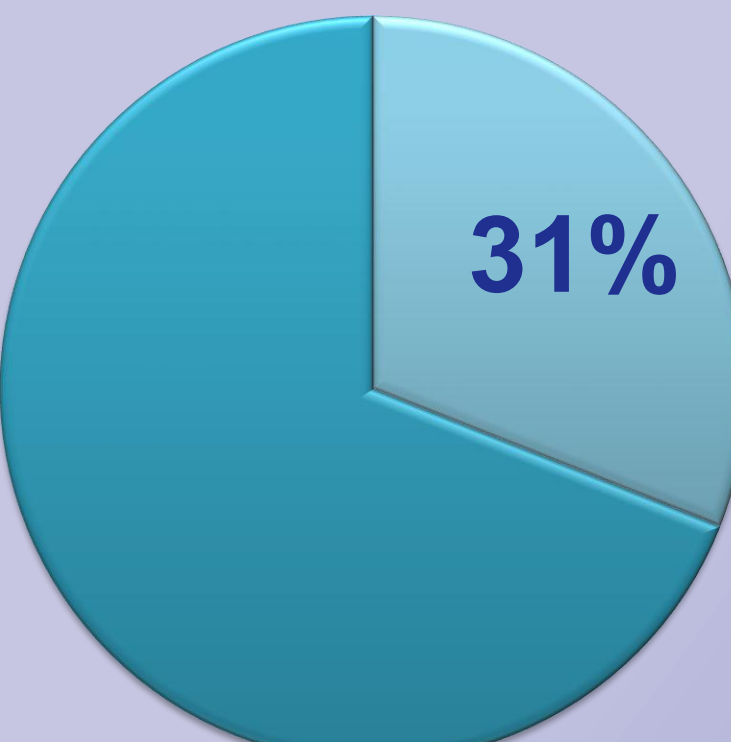
	%	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Sex					
Female	7%				
Male	93%				
Age		46.0	12.2	23.0	93.0
Other Characteristics					
Years Post-TBI		13.5	10.2	1.0	59.0
Years of Service		13.4	9.1	1.0	36.0



Caregiving negatively affects physical health



Caregivers have had time to see doctor in the past 3 months



Caregivers regularly get a good night's sleep



Conclusions

- Findings highlight substantial caregiver strain, high care intensity, and mental and physical health concerns among caregivers of V/SMs with TBI. These persist many years post-injury.
- Clinical Implications:** Providers should address caregiver health and support needs as part of the TBI care plan.
- Future work should identify policy actions that could provide long-term support and services to strengthen family readiness and resilience of SM/V with TBI.



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