

University of Maryland Baltimore Graduate School

# Announcement of Doctoral Dissertation Defense\*

Candidate: Carol Spence, MS, RN, APRN, BC-PCM

Date, Time, and Place: 14 February 2008, 10:00, Room 503, School of Nursing, 655 W. Lombard St., Baltimore

Dissertation Title: Positive Aspects of the Family Caregiving Experience in Hospice

Dissertation Abstract\*\*:

**Background:** The informal caregiving experience affects the course of bereavement and emotional wellbeing of caregivers, as well as caregiver morbidity and mortality during the bereavement period. A positive subjective appraisal of the caregiving experience is more likely to result in less distress and symptomatology during bereavement. Supportive interventions for family caregivers providing end-of-life care have a positive impact that persists into the bereavement period. Family caregivers of dying individuals who received hospice care are a particular sub-set of family caregivers. One goal of hospice care delivery is to support family caregivers in such a way that the caregiving experience is a positive one.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to explore the predictors of a positive appraisal of the caregiving experience by bereaved family caregivers whose care recipients were enrolled in hospice, with particular attention to the contribution of selected aspects of hospice care. Positive appraisal was examined in terms of gain derived from the caregiving experience and a sense of competence related to caregiving.

**Methods:** This cross-sectional, non-experimental, descriptive study included a sample of 409 bereaved family caregivers of individuals who died while enrolled in hospice. Data were collected using mailed surveys sent to the caregivers and administrative data from the hospice that provided the care. Two regression models were developed: 1) to determine the contribution of caregiver characteristics, care recipient characteristics, and hospice care to caregiver competence; and 2) to determine the contribution of caregiver characteristics, care recipient characteristics, caregiver competence, and hospice care to caregiver gain.

**Results:** Selected caregiver characteristics and hospice care explained 7.9% of the variance in caregiver competence. Selected caregiver characteristics and caregiver competence explained 31.0% of the variance in caregiver gain. Caregiver competence did not moderate the relationship between caregiver characteristics and caregiver gain.

**Conclusion:** A sense of caregiver competence exerts significant influence on the development of caregiver gain in hospice family caregivers. Hospice professionals need to focus on those aspects of hospice care provision that are aimed at enhancing the sense of competence in family caregivers of care recipients who receive hospice care.

Dissertation Committee Chair (name and title): Erika Friedmann, PhD, Professor

Dissertation Committee Members (names and titles):

Sue Thomas, PhD, RN, FAAN, Professor

Debra Wiegand, PhD, RN, Assistant Professor

Karen Kauffman, PhD, RN, Associate Professor

Joan Harrold, MD, MPH, Vice President Medical Services Hospice of Lancaster

*\*The Open Presentation is open to the university community and invitees of the candidate. Any member of the Graduate Faculty may observe the Final Examination. Only committee members may vote. For more information, see Procedures for Examination of the Doctoral Dissertation.*

*\*\*You must type your abstract on this form in the space provided.*

Updated: February 24, 2006