On-Line Discussion Boards: Impact on Caregiver Reports of Satisfaction, Support and Decision Making in Health Care

Laura A. Taylor, PhD, RN1, Pamela Walker, BSN, RN2; Marie T. Nolan1, Dorry Segev, MD2, Krysia Hudson, MS, RN1, Megan Hoffmann, BSN, RN1
1The Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing and 2Johns Hopkins Hospital

Abstract
Informatics initiatives, including on-line discussion boards, increase the accessibility of health care information and may strengthen patient and caregiver levels of satisfaction with health care. In 2005, 95% of the living organ donors in the U.S. were living kidney donors. Care of the donor frequently falls to the spouse/companion and has been reported as extremely stressful. The proposed study seeks to better prepare the caregiver through the use of online information-discussion board interaction.

Introduction
The evidence across multiple studies suggests that spouses and caregivers of patients desire additional educational resources, information sharing and social support.1-4 Added resources play a key role in the well-being of the caregiver and minimize negative coping strategies. Caregivers of living donors have reported utilizing the Internet for additional support and information regarding donation, especially post operative recovery. Pain, and other areas such as financial responsibilities, have been identified as areas of care that donors and their caregivers are not adequately prepared.4-6 Despite the evidence of distress among family caregivers of living donors, we found no intervention studies that examined ways to support family caregivers of persons recovering from living kidney donation.

Purpose/Specific Aims
The purpose of the proposed study is to pilot test a study design and instruments to describe the impact of an online discussion board forum on living kidney donor caregivers reports of satisfaction and support throughout the donation experience.

Methodology
This study will use a mixed method approach including a quasi-experimental design and qualitative description. A sample of convenience will be used with random assignment of subjects to the intervention group or control group. The control group will receive the standard of care for donor family education which is education delivered by transplant nurse coordinators and surgeons during the donor evaluation visits to the Johns Hopkins Outpatient Center (JHOC). The intervention group will receive the standard of care for donor family education as well as access to an online discussion board with other donor caregivers.

Conclusion
Information gleaned from on-line discussion boards may positively affect caregivers’ ability to interact efficiently and productively with health care professionals and make them better able to care for themselves and their loved one in the realm of living kidney donation.

References