

Research on the Psychological Effects of

Self-help Groups for Male Caregivers

With a Focus on Caring for their Wives with Alzheimer's disease

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Many studies have shown that participation in self-help groups is effective in supporting caregivers. Recently, in Japan, male caregivers are increasing, and self-help groups for male caregivers are beginning to form. However, there is little research that focuses on self-help groups composed of only male caregivers.

This research shows the process model of these male caregivers, who joined self-help groups for male caregivers, who start and continue to join such groups, and who consider psychological effects, thus bringing a change to their care for wife-related and self-help group participation.

Data is based on interviews with three male caregivers who joined a self-help group for male caregivers, held by a city social welfare council.

By analyzing the three interviews, three categories are found.

Through joining the self-help group, male caregivers received " mutual feelings " from others. They looked forward to meeting participants who had experienced nearly the same care. They also sympathized and accepted each other unconditionally. These " sympathetic relationships " promoted the understanding of Alzheimer's disease and its patients.

They could also get a sense of other male caregivers' care methods, and they reviewed each type of care objectively and gained confidence in each respective care method. Such " self-esteem " and " sympathetic relationships " promoted adjustment to different care methods and the solicitation of help from others.

This study demonstrates how self-help groups for male care affect male caregivers. Some research shows that male caregivers tend to " pile up " and are poor at asking for help. Thus, self-help groups for male care are a proper form of support for them.