**AN EXAMINATION OF ‘CHOICE’ ON MENTAL HEALTH OF INFORMAL CAREGIVERS FOR PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES.**

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**Objective:** The effect of ‘Choice’ on mental health concerns among Intellectual Developmental Disability caregivers has not been extensively examined. It is common among children of care receivers such as those with , dementia or cancer to report that they lacked a choice in the decision to care for their parents, while those who are not immediate family members often described having a choice in their caregiving duties. Where it was found that having a choice in their caregiving role has a substantial impact on the emotional health of caregivers (Bouldin, Winter & Andresen, 2005). As such, choice may also be a factor for mental health of caregivers for persons with intellectual developmental disabilities.

**Method:** Using the Statistics Canada 2012 General Social Survey – Cycle 26 on caregiving and care receiving we examine a multitude of measures including choice, caregiver task burden, self-rated stress, and self-rated mental health among others to determine if: 1) those who believe they lack choice in becoming a caregiver have greater mental health concerns compared to those who believe they do have a choice; 2) those who have a higher caregiver burden will experience greater mental health concerns compared to those with lower caregiver burden; and 3) having a higher caregiver burden will have a stronger effect on mental health concerns among those who believe they lack choice in becoming a caregiver compared to those who believe they do have a choice.

**Results:** Preliminary data has shown that of the 212 participants, 98 felt that they did *not* have a choice taking on their role, often caring for their son (N=51) or daughter (N=25), and 80 felt that they *did* have a choice in their role, often caring for their son (N=18), daughter (N=5), or a close friend (N=14). Of those who believe to have a choice, 30% feel that their mental health is excellent, compared to only 15% of those who state that they do not have a choice in their caregiving role. Further statistical analyses will provide relational results to the questions mentioned above, examining the relationships between caregiving stress, choice, and informal intellectual disability caregiver mental health.

**Discussion/Conclusion:** Preliminary results suggest that intellectual developmental disability caregivers may have greater mental health concerns when they feel as though they do not have a choice in their caregiving role, compared to when they feel they do have a choice. As statistical analyses are still in progress, final regressions, gaps in the literature and considerations for future research will be presented on the poster. Understanding the effects of ‘choice’ on the mental health of caregivers for persons with intellectual developmental disabilities can help to develop clinical solutions when helping these caregivers with their mental health concerns.

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