

Gerontology Assignment 3

For this assignment I interviewed my sister, as she was one of the primary caregivers for our grandmother for the better part of half a year. She certainly didn't do it alone, so there was plenty of information she didn't have, but she still seemed the best to interview.

Who handles the financial burden of elder caregiving?

Originally it was handled by my uncle, but after she was moved to the assisted living center it became much more complicated, so we got an accountant to help figure it out.

What made the financials complicated enough to warrant an accountant?

There were so many separate costs and incomes that all needed to be properly documented that it was just a mess. With Medicare, insurance, private payments, VA benefits, and who knows what else it was really hard to figure it all out.

What were the social impacts of transitioning to care dependence?

It was really straining on our family. My grandfather was really stubborn about the entire situation and it led to many fights and arguments between him and his kids. At one point the cops were called on him, and to this day he won't talk to uncle John. He doesn't trust doctors and he's convinced a home is going to kill her. I just hope we'll be able to recover from this.

Were there any advantages to being a family member as a care giver?

It certainly made me more comfortable with her, but in this case I don't think it had much of impact on her. Most of the time she doesn't even know I'm there, let alone that she knows me. That does make it considerably harder for me sometimes, but I think it's the best of a bad situation.

Why are you one of the primary care givers? Why not others?

Because nobody else will do it. I mean uncle John helps out a lot, and dad helps when he can, but mostly everyone else is just talk. It's not such a big deal now that she's in the home, she's finally got professional help, but for a while there it was getting kind of tough just finding the time.

What support was available for you, as a caregiver?

Emotionally, dad was supporting me from the beginning. Apart from that, not much. There probably is more stuff out there if I had looked, but I knew it wasn't going to be long term so I didn't really look.

Reflection

This one was pretty personal which makes the impact a bit stronger. Going into it there were many answers I already knew, and some that were a surprise. To be honest though, most of the answers I didn't already know were answers that I didn't want to hear. Throughout this situation I did very little beyond emotional support to my family. Everyone was always yelling at each other about what the best move would be and I didn't to be a part of that.

I did find it pretty interesting that they hired an accountant. I come from a long line of frugal people and the idea of spending money to have someone do something for you, especially my grandfather, certainly took me off guard. After hearing it explained I totally understand the decision, but it still came as a surprise. It makes me wonder what kind of systems will be in place when I'm of retirement age. Will I have to hire somebody to help? How many people will it take? My grandfather has a support system bigger than most, he has 9 children and half of them are married. I don't plan on having kids, so what kind of situation will I be in?

The social strain of the situation was really impactful. Seeing a really close family polarize in so many ways in just a month was surreal. With half of my family mad at the other half it makes it really hard to focus on my grandmother as the really important one in this situation. If we can't put aside our differences for her, then what can we do? It makes me wonder what the long term impact will be. What will our family holidays look like? With my grandfather pushing everyone away, what will his support system look like when this is all over. Will it ever be over?

I've also thought a lot about what this has done to my immediate family. The direct impact on myself is pretty minimal, but I can see it's done a lot to my sisters and my father. Are we going to go through the same thing with my grandfather? What about my father? Is it going to be my sister who is

the primary caregiver again? What about me and my sisters? None of us plan on having kids, so what will our support systems look like?

Getting old sucks.