



Taking Care Of Caregivers

(NAPSA)—Doctors now encourage family caregivers to take as good care of themselves as they do others.

The act of a family member caring for a terminally ill loved one has become an increasingly common American phenomenon. A recent survey commissioned by the National Family Caregivers Association (NFCA) found that nearly 27 percent of those asked were currently, or for the past year had been, caring for a family member or friend—that translates to more than 54 million American caregivers.

While caregiving is generally considered a selfless act, doctors warn that it is important for caregivers to consider their own well-being—not just their loved ones. The NFCA reports that 61 percent of “intense” family caregivers (those who provide at least 21 hours of care a week) have suffered from depression—a condition that often goes unnoticed by other family members.

“The act of providing care and being available to a dying person is a very individual thing. But in almost every case, it is easy for others to concentrate on the patient and not see the caregiver crumbling before their very eyes,” says Karen Nichols, D.O.

Dr. Nichols, an osteopathic physician (D.O.) who specializes in internal and geriatric medicine, says that D.O.s can help bring



Osteopathic physicians (D.O.s) can help caregivers take care of their sick family members—and themselves.

relief to caregivers and their patients.

D.O.s are trained in a “whole-person,” patient-oriented approach to healthcare. Specifically, they are taught to talk with and counsel those who provide care to family or friends who are in the end stages of their life—and to work with the patients themselves.

“D.O.s take care of people, not just their symptoms, so providing end-of-life care is a natural,” Dr. Nichols says. “Although we may not be able to cure the illness, we can provide comfort and support for the patient and family caregivers.”

D.O.s are fully licensed physicians, able to prescribe medication and perform surgery.

To learn more about D.O.s and osteopathic medicine, visit the American Osteopathic Association Web site at www.aoa-net.org or call toll free 1-800-621-1773.

