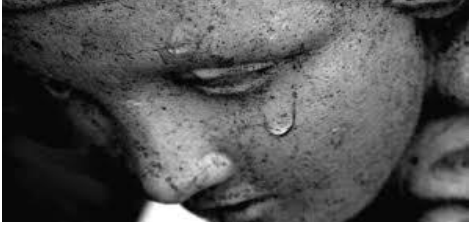


Living with Loss Before Death: Understanding Anticipatory Grief in Dementia Care

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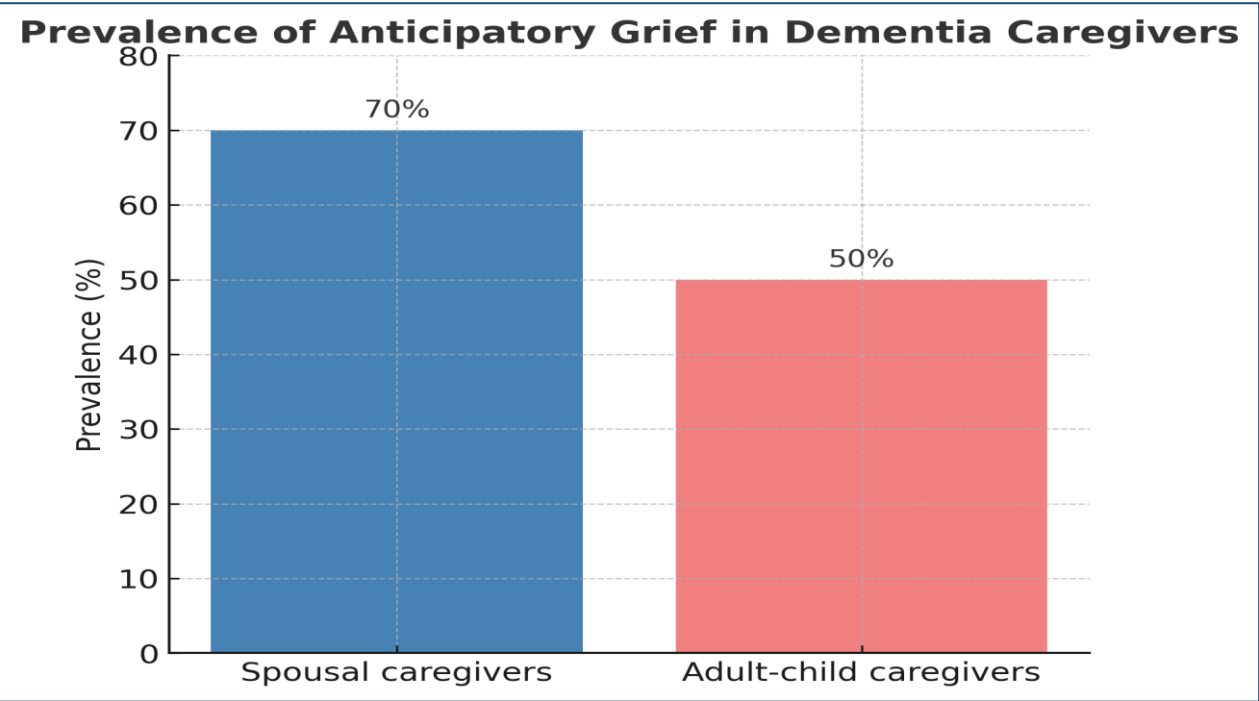


Introduction

Caregivers of people with dementia experience ongoing emotional, social, and functional losses long before the actual death occurs. This process, known as **anticipatory grief (AG)**, is common among family caregivers and has been linked to **depression, stress, caregiver burden, and reduced quality of life**.

Results

- Prevalence:** Anticipatory grief affects between **47–71%** of dementia caregivers.
- Caregiver type:** Spousal caregivers report higher levels of AG compared to adult-children, particularly in late-stage dementia.
- Mental health outcomes:** AG is consistently linked to **depressive symptoms, heightened stress, and social isolation**.
- Risk factors:** Greater AG is associated with **longer duration of caregiving, higher dependency of the patient, and fewer social supports**.



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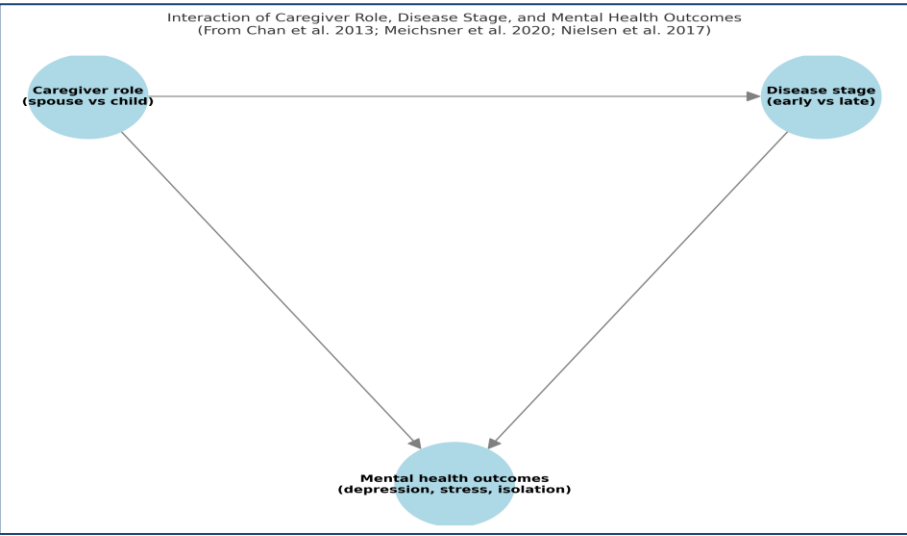
Conflict of Interest Statement: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Methods

- This poster synthesises findings from:
 - Systematic reviews** (Collins et al., 2020; Liew et al., 2021)
 - Longitudinal studies** on caregiver mental health (Chan et al., 2013; Meichsner et al., 2020)
- Studies comparing **spousal vs. adult-child caregivers** across different stages of dementia.

Discussion

Anticipatory grief is a **multifaceted phenomenon** with emotional, psychological, and social implications. It highlights how dementia caregiving is not only a physical task but also an ongoing emotional loss. Recognition of AG is critical, as unaddressed grief can worsen caregiver burden and compromise both caregiver and patient well-being.



Conclusion

- Early recognition** of anticipatory grief should be part of dementia care pathways.
- Tailored psychosocial support** (peer support groups, coping skills training, anticipatory bereavement counselling) may reduce negative outcomes.
- Supporting caregivers benefits **both caregiver resilience and quality of dementia care**.