

The Lived Experience of African American Caregivers Caring for Adult African American  
Patients with Heart Failure: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

An estimated 5.7 million people in the United States are currently living with heart failure (HF); this population is expected to double in the next 25 years due to advances in modern medicine that have decreased the mortality rates for cardiovascular diseases. Because of the complex regimen required, the help of family members, friends or neighbors is crucial to adequately managing symptoms and preventing hospital readmissions. Descriptive phenomenology underpins this study. Formal interviews were used to explore African American caregivers' lived experience in caring for African American heart failure patients. Snowball sampling and purposive sampling yielded a total of 10 interviewed participants, which achieved data saturation.

The interviews were analyzed using Colaizzi's steps. Seven themes emerged: (1) Juggling act, (2) Layers of support, (3) Realization of self-neglect, (4) Experiencing the "blues," (5) Connecting with healthcare provider, (6) Unmet financial needs and (7) Perception of non-adherence. Thorough information regarding the experience of African American caregivers of heart failure patients obtained through this research will enhance the resources available to healthcare professionals for delivering culturally competent support to African American caregivers, thereby improving quality of life for heart failure patients and their caregivers.

Key words: Heart Failure, African Americans, Caregivers, and Phenomenology#