

1. INTRODUCTION

- Individuals with chronic illness or disability may require care that extends beyond paid health services. Often, this care is provided by family and friends (i.e., informal caregivers).
- Informal caregivers may struggle to identify and access supportive resources for themselves and their care recipients, especially in rural and remote communities.
- Understanding the unique needs and barriers experienced by informal caregivers in rural and remote communities is essential for addressing service gaps in these areas.

2. OBJECTIVES

- To characterize areas of need among informal caregivers statewide.
- To understand barriers to providing informal care and to improving the quality of life among older adults in Wyoming from the perspective of informal caregivers.

3. METHODS

Recruitment

- Participants were recruited from attendees of the 2018 Wyoming Conference on Aging who self-identified as informal caregivers.

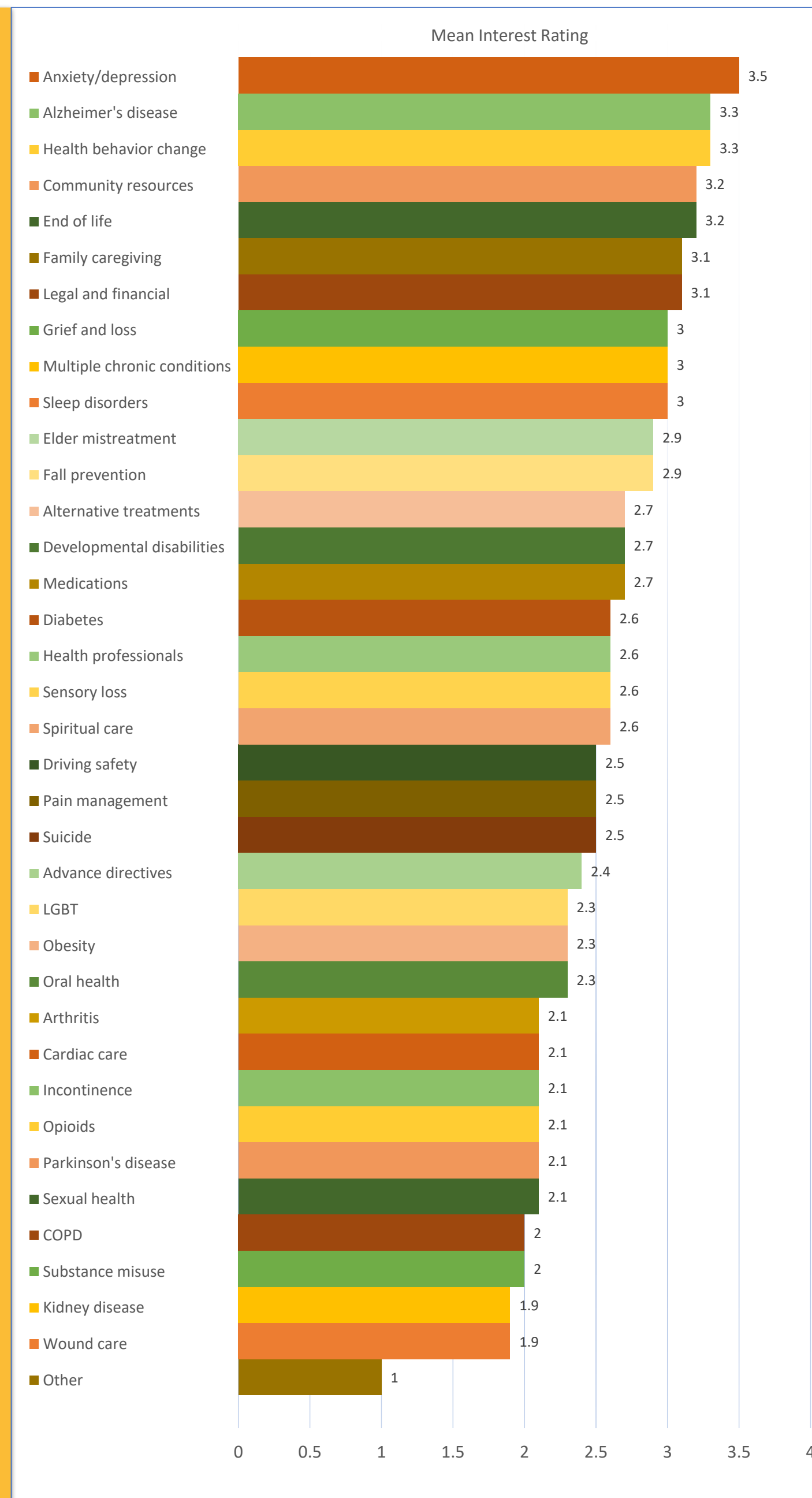
Materials & Instruments

- Participants received a paper-and-pencil Needs Assessment Survey.
- Participants rated their interest in a variety of geriatric educational topics (1 = "none" to 4 = "strong") and responded to open-ended questions about barriers.

Analysis

- Descriptive statistics were calculated using SPSS version 24 and were used to characterize participants and interest in geriatric topics.
- Thematic analysis was used to identify themes among barriers to providing informal care and barriers to improving the quality of life for older adults in Wyoming.

Figure 1. Interest in Geriatric Education Topics



4. RESULTS

Participant Characteristics

- Self-identified informal caregivers residing in Wyoming ($n = 16$).
- Provided informal care to individuals with Alzheimer's disease or other dementia ($n = 3$, 18.8%), chronic illness ($n = 8$, 50.0%), or both ($n = 5$, 31.2%).

Interest in Geriatric Education Topics

- Anxiety and depression ($M = 3.5$, $SD = 0.7$), Alzheimer's disease and dementia ($M = 3.3$, $SD = 0.8$), health behavior change ($M = 3.3$, $SD = 0.8$), and community resources ($M = 3.3$, $SD = 0.8$) emerged as areas of greatest interest (see Figure 1).

Informal Caregiving Barriers

- The following emerged as themes among barriers to providing informal care: availability of resources, cost of resources, access to resources, rural-specific barriers, knowledge about caregiving and related services, and mental health concerns.

Improving Quality of Life Barriers

- The following emerged as themes among barriers to improving the quality of life for older adults in Wyoming: availability of caregiver support services, access to services, cost of services, knowledge of aging topics and community resources, rural-specific barriers, and provider communication.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- Results reveal a high priority for increasing education for caregivers about a range of topics, including anxiety, depression, Alzheimer's disease, and health behavior change.
- Interest in education about community resources complements themes among barriers, such as limited knowledge of and access to community resources.
- Initiatives such as Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Programs are instrumental in addressing needs identified by informal caregivers of older adults.