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Name: Bakas-2009-Stroke.pdf

Size: 720.8Kb

Format: PDF

[View/Open](#)

Permanent Link: <http://hdl.handle.net/1805/5106>

Date: 2009-03

Keywords: [clinical trial](#) ; [depression](#) ; [family caregivers](#) ; [stroke](#)

Cite As: Bakas, T., Farran, C. J., Austin, J. K., Given, B. A., Johnson, E. A., & Williams, L. S. (2009). Stroke caregiver outcomes from the telephone assessment and skill-building kit (TASK). *Topics in stroke rehabilitation*, 16(2), 105-121.

Abstract:

Purpose: Stroke caregivers often express the need for information about stroke and assistance with stroke-related care in the early discharge period. The Telephone Assessment and Skill-Building Kit (TASK) is an 8-week program that addresses caregiver needs. This study explored the efficacy of the TASK program in improving stroke caregiver outcomes. Method: Guided by a conceptual model, 6 outcomes (optimism, task difficulty, threat appraisal, depressive symptoms, life changes, general health perceptions) were measured in 40 caregivers randomized to the TASK (n = 21) or an attention control group (n = 19). Data were analyzed using analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), controlling for baseline scores and minutes spent with the nurse. Results: Significant increases in optimism at 4 weeks, 8 weeks, and 12 weeks were found, with medium effect sizes for the TASK group relative to the control group (p < .05). Significant improvements in task difficulty at 4 weeks, and threat appraisal at both 8 weeks and 12 weeks were also found (p < .05). Conclusion: Caregivers receiving the TASK intervention improved in optimism, task difficulty, and threat appraisal. Further testing of an enhanced version of the TASK program is warranted, with attention directed toward more distal stroke caregiver outcomes.

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