Rosalynn Carter Institute investigates caregiving and mental health

Mrs. Carter leads expert panel meeting May 2-3 in Atlanta

ATLANTA—Half of all caregivers are clinically depressed—that research finding will be a key point of discussion May 2-3 as the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Human Development (RCI) convenes a panel of national experts at the Carter Center to examine caregiving and mental health.

Mrs. Carter, a longtime champion of mental health and caregiving, will use this platform to bring together the work of individuals at the RCI and the Carter Center Mental Health Program in Atlanta.

“More than 15 million caregivers provide unpaid care to relatives who are aged, chronically mentally ill and mentally retarded,” said Ronda C. Talley, Ph.D., executive director of the RCI. “There is a great need to better educate individuals about what they can do to help promote mental health and to prevent and treat mental health problems.”

The burden of caring for a family member places caregivers at risk for mental and physical disorders, Talley said.

Virtually all caregiving studies find high rates of clinical depression and anxiety among caregivers. Dr. Carl Eisdorfer, expert panelist in caregiving and mental health research and director of the Center of Adult Development and Aging at the University of Miami, found an estimated 46-59 percent of caregivers are clinically depressed. Approximately 49 percent of female caregivers and 31 percent of male caregivers experience depression as a result of caregiving.

Eleven panelists will discuss the mental health impact on physical health of caregivers, ethnic and cultural considerations, faith-based approaches to caregiving and mental health policy for caregivers. The panel will also collaborate to write a book as part of a new caregiving book series to be published.

The Johnson & Johnson/RCI Caregivers Program is a unique business/academic partnership that addresses areas of need in caregiving through a Practice in Action component and a Science to Practice
Initiative. Caregiving and Mental Health panel members include: Carl Eisdorfer of the University of Miami; Patricia Stone Motes, Institute for Families in Society; Stephen Post, Case Western Reserve University; Pamela Jumper Thurman, Tri-Ethnic Center for Prevention Research; Thomas R. Smith, International Center for the Integration of Health and Spirituality; William Beardslee, Harvard University; Anita Brown, Hampton University; Jane Myers, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Michael J. English, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; Susan Taylor-Brown, University of Rochester Medical School; and Sherry R. Schachter, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. The panel will be moderated by Talley, Gregory Fricchione of the Carter Center Mental Health Program and Rick Martinez, of Johnson & Johnson.

The Rosalynn Carter Institute, affiliated with Mrs. Carter’s alma mater Georgia Southwestern State University in Americus, was formed in honor of Mrs. Carter in 1987. In 2000, Johnson & Johnson partnered with the RCI to create a signature program in caregiving. The J&J/RCI Caregivers Program focuses on two primary dimensions of caregiving: practice and science. In the Science to Practice component, several panels have convened to consider issues related to their specialty areas. This panel has been convened to provide information about the connections between mental health and caregiving.

REPORTERS/EDITORS:
Members of the media are invited to cover panel discussions at the Carter Center in Atlanta. For more information, call Wes Sumner at (229) 931-2038 or the RCI at (229) 928-1234.

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