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Author: Ladson Hinton

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## Making sense of behavioral and psychological symptoms of dementia

Ladson Hinton, M.D.

University of California, Davis

Sacramento, California

lhinton@ucdavis.edu

Behavioral and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD) are an enormous public health issue. The vast majority of persons with dementia will experience significant BPSD during the course of their illness. These diverse set of symptoms contribute not only to disability in the person living with dementia but also to the level of stress and depression in family caregivers. Difficult to treat BPSD remain one of the most challenging aspects of the clinical care of persons living with dementia. While evidence-based psychosocial interventions are available to reduce caregiver stress and strengthen their skills in managing day-to-day challenges including BPSD, we urgently need to more broadly disseminate and implement these programs in care delivery settings (e.g., clinics, social services agencies) to improve access and provide necessary support for family caregivers.<sup>1</sup>

Understanding how family caregivers make sense of dementia-related behavioral problems can help to engage family caregivers and promote the delivery of evidence-based models of care. An extensive literature and set of theoretical models, developed in health psychology and the social sciences, highlight the important role of illness attributions in shaping fundamental health behaviors, including care seeking, treatment adherence, and strategies for everyday management of illness symptoms.<sup>2,3</sup> While much of this literature focuses on the individual patient, it is equally relevant to caregivers and others in the patient's social network. While a significant amount of work in the dementia field has

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