



## **NEW REPORT UNDERSCORES URGENT NEED TO SUPPORT MILLIONS OF STRUGGLING FAMILY CAREGIVERS OF OLDER ADULTS**

*The John A. Hartford Foundation hails “Families Caring for an Aging America” report, supports call for “family-centered care,” greater recognition for caregivers, improvements in practice and policy*

New York, NY (September 14, 2016) – The nearly 18 million family caregivers of older adults in the U.S. shoulder enormous responsibility, frequently performing complex medical and nursing tasks. However, according to [“Families Caring for an Aging America,”](#) an important new report from the [National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine](#), health systems under-value these heroic and unpaid contributions and fail to prepare caregivers or support their physical, psychological, and financial well-being. [The John A. Hartford Foundation](#) today called on policymakers, health system leaders, and clinicians to take up the recommendations from this rigorous study and develop a national strategy to transform policies and practices that will improve recognition and support for family caregivers within and beyond our health care system.

“Family caregivers of older adults are almost invisible in our health care system, yet the system could not function without them,” said [Terry Fulmer, RN, PhD, FAAN](#), president of The John A. Hartford Foundation. “The John A. Hartford Foundation shares the serious concerns expressed in this report, which brings attention to the unmet needs of these modern day heroes, examines the evidence-based programs and interventions that already exist to support family caregiving, and offers a valuable blueprint for action to tackle this urgent challenge.”

[“Families Caring for an Aging America”](#) is available for download from the website of The John A. Hartford Foundation, the lead funder of the Academies’ family caregiving report, which had support from 15 sponsors in all.

The Foundation believes that elevating the position of family caregivers within the health care system, expanding the training and support that they receive, and preparing and compensating clinicians and community organizations to address their needs are all critical elements of improving the care of older adults.

To better serve both caregivers and the family members and friends they assist, the Foundation endorses the Academies’ recommendation to develop systems of care that are *family-centered* as well as person-centered, and appropriately recognize, empower, and protect caregivers. This work must also address the growing diversity of older adults and their family caregivers.

“In my own work as a geriatric nurse, I have seen the enormous strain on family caregivers and the tremendous effort required to communicate with health care providers, maintain medication regimens, perform personal care tasks, and look after loved ones in the throes of dementia and other diseases,” said Dr. Fulmer. “I know how hard it can be on families, and I have seen the ways that our system too often excludes them from important decision-making, yet assumes they are willing and able to do this

very difficult job. We must do better by our family caregivers, which is why family caregiving will continue to be a top funding priority for The John A. Hartford Foundation.”

The John A. Hartford Foundation previously funded a key study from the AARP Public Policy Institute, [“Home Alone: Family Caregivers Providing Complex Chronic Care,”](#) which chronicled the extent to which the role of family caregivers has dramatically expanded to include performing complex medical or nursing tasks, often without training or support, such as:

- providing wound care,
- administering intravenous fluids and injections,
- managing medications, and
- navigating the fragmented health care and long-term services and supports systems.

These tasks can be even more complicated for caregivers of people with Alzheimer’s disease or other complex conditions. The report notes that 8.5 million caregivers are supporting older adults with “high need” related to dementia or functional impairments.

The John A. Hartford Foundation also supports the report’s call for better identification and incorporation of caregivers into health care records and all aspects of care delivery, increased access to evidence-based interventions and counseling, self-care, and respite programs that improve caregivers’ confidence and ability to manage daily care challenges, as well as better data collection and research funding to accelerate innovations that can improve both caregivers’ and care recipients’ quality of life.

### **About The John A. Hartford Foundation**

Founded in 1929 by John and George Hartford of the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company (A & P), The John A. Hartford Foundation, based in New York City, is a private, nonpartisan philanthropy dedicated to improving the care of older adults. Every eight seconds, someone in America turns 65. The largest-ever generation of older adults is living and working longer, redefining later life, and enriching our communities and society. Comprehensive, coordinated, and continuous care that keeps older adults as healthy as possible is essential to sustaining these valuable contributions. The John A. Hartford Foundation believes that investments in aging experts and innovations can transform how care is delivered, lowering costs and dramatically improving the health of older adults. Additional information about the Foundation and its programs is available at [www.jhartfound.org](http://www.jhartfound.org).

### **MEDIA CONTACT**

Marcus Escobedo  
Senior Program Officer, The John A. Hartford Foundation  
[marcus.escobedo@johnahartford.org](mailto:marcus.escobedo@johnahartford.org)  
212.832.7788