

# Facebook app offers opportunity to help unpaid Alzheimer's caregivers via friendsourcing

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David Wilkerson, an assistant professor in the IU School of Social Work and a member of the Facebook app research team. Credit: IU School of Social Work

Researchers at IUPUI have developed a Facebook app that, a study shows, offers a way to provide much-needed support to unpaid caregivers of people with Alzheimer's disease.

The study, "Friendsourcing Peer Support for Alzheimer's Caregivers Using Facebook Social Media," states that there is a significant opportunity to help improve caregiver stress, burden and [support](#) through online peer support interventions.

The app was developed as part of an investigation of a peer support group intervention in which emotional and informational issues that arose in the support group were pushed to the [caregiver's](#) Facebook friends as questions.

The Facebook friends then had the opportunity to enlist as a member of a support network by answering the support group questions. Researchers said that when those emotional and

informational questions were answered, the caregivers experienced a feeling of increased support.

The study is believed to be the first to examine the use of friendsourcing—a variant of crowdsourcing—for the delivery of online support to Alzheimer's caregivers.

"Given the recent problems of social media, our study provides evidence of the social good that can be obtained with social media using telehealth innovations like friendsourcing, which we developed for supporting Alzheimer's caregiving," said David Wilkerson, an assistant professor in the IU School of Social Work and a member of the Facebook app research team.

In the U.S., more than 15 million informal caregivers provide unpaid care to people with Alzheimer's disease. Providing such care comes with its own risks: Studies have shown that caregivers have higher rates of depression, anxiety, insomnia and cardiovascular disease.

**More information:** David A. Wilkerson et al. Friendsourcing Peer Support for Alzheimer's Caregivers Using Facebook Social Media, *Journal of Technology in Human Services* (2018). [DOI: 10.1080/15228835.2018.1449709](https://doi.org/10.1080/15228835.2018.1449709)

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