

To Honour and Cherish: Finding Meaning and Value as a Spouse and Dementia Care Partner

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Sherril B. Gelmon, DrPH; Former Spouse Care Partner and Professor Emerita of Health Systems & Policy
OHSU-PSU School of Public Health, Portland State University, Portland, OR, USA

KEY MESSAGES: Spouse’s role in dementia navigation and care is unique, challenging, and often not recognized or appreciated. Clinical and social services need redesign to better support the spouse in navigating changing personal life circumstances and the dementia system, so they can better care for the spouse living with dementia.

CONTEXT	SYSTEM ISSUES	USEFUL ACTION	RECOMMENDATIONS	CONCLUSIONS
• 11-year personal journey with husband Phil living with dementia, while maintaining my full-time academic career • Know how the health system works yet still encountered many barriers • Proactive in advocating for self and finding resources • Refocused research to address supports for care partners after Phil died • Co-founder “The Dementia Care Partner Hub” • Co-leader Walking the Talk for Dementia research program (2024-2026)	• Spouse is needed but not the focus of clinical care • Few services to help navigate legal, financial, operational systems • Counselling may not be offered to spouse to explore their new roles • Spouse needs to learn new skills and tasks to manage life and home alone • Lack of opportunities to explore deeply personal challenges with others in similar situations • Respite (short/long) not available, affordable, or accessible for many	• 5 spouses of people with dementia met at Walking the Talk for Dementia 2025 (from 5 countries) • Now have unstructured Zooms every 3-4 weeks • Share challenges, joys, learn together, support 	• Realign dementia care to address the needs of the couple, not just the person with a diagnosis • Invite spousal care partners into dementia service planning as a key voice • Factor spouse into design, logistics, and compensation for clinical trials • Create easily accessible community information hubs spanning all aspects of daily life, with peer support • Prioritize funding for respite services to enable spouses to get breaks from caregiving and recharge	• Dementia changes the marital relationship in fundamental ways • Navigating the new reality is lonely and challenging • A healthy, calm, informed spouse is essential to support and care for the person with a diagnosis CONTACT gelmons@pdx.edu Join us for a virtual poster walk Sunday 3:30-4:15 pm 