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FORMULARIO PARA LA PRESENTACIÓN DE *ABSTRACTS*.

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Título de la comunicación: "*Keeping Balance*': Family Experience of Living With Early Stage Alzheimer's Disease"

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Abstract (300 palabras):

Background and purpose: Research on Alzheimer's family care has been largely focused on dyadic relationships and the experience of burden and stress, providing little understanding of the complexity and reciprocity of the caring dynamic as it unfolds over time. This study sought to identify, describe and explore the main family processes involved in living with early stage AD and the effects of caring on the dynamics and functioning of the family unit.

Methods: Data were collected from a series of in-depth family interviews (24) conducted with seven families in early stage of AD over an 18-month period. Using a constructivist grounded theory methodology, data were analysed to capture the main processes involved. Co-construction of the findings was also carried out including three focus groups with 15 family caregivers in middle-advanced stages.

Results: Constant comparative analysis of data led to the emergence of a three-phase model: '*what's going on?*', '*our life is changing*' and '*keeping things together*'. The initial phase is underpinned by the process of '*noticing*' which shapes the first encounter with the disease and informs the later family care strategies of '*keeping an eye on*', '*preventing*' and '*protecting*'. '*Our life is changing*' captures the process of '*redefining*' by which families adapt to their new changed life. They navigate between the practical and emotional challenges of day-to-day life and developing tentative plans for dealing with the future. '*Keeping things together*' includes the process of '*balancing*', whereby families seek to maintain a balance between providing care and support to their relatives and continuing with their own life project. Balancing involves the family sub-processes of '*reorganizing*', '*negotiating*' and '*decision making*'.



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Conclusion and implications: The study suggests that early stage AD challenges the equilibrium and normal function of the family. The identified family processes offer insights for developing family system support tailored to early stages.