CAREGIVERS ARE OFTEN FACED WITH MANY CHALLENGES SURROUNDING END-OF-LIFE DECISION-MAKING FOR LOVED ONES. AN INCREASING NUMBER OF PATIENTS ARE CONSIDERING PASSING AWAY AT HOME DUE TO COMFORT, CONTROL AND FAMILIARITY WITH THE ENVIRONMENT.

NOW, A RESEARCHER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI HAS FOUND THAT HOME DEATHS CAN BE PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY CHALLENGING, ESPECIALLY FOR CAREGIVERS.

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY SCIENCE JACQUELYN BENSON AND HER TEAM INTERVIEWED CAREGIVERS TO IDENTIFY COMMON THEMES SURROUNDING THE EXPERIENCES OF HOME DEATHS.

“One of the things we saw reflected in the stories of caregivers we interviewed was the discomfort they felt about having their home transformed into a medical space. In many cases, caregiving for someone at end of life necessitates that, and that can be disruptive on an emotional level for the caregiver themselves, not just on a physical level.”

BENSON ADDED THAT DYING AT HOME IS NOT NECESSARILY A BETTER EXPERIENCE THAN DYING IN A LESS FAMILIAR ENVIRONMENT. THE ADVICE SHE GIVES TO FAMILY CAREGIVERS WHO ARE UNCERTAIN ABOUT CARING FOR A LOVED ONE AT HOME IS TO HAVE DIRECT COMMUNICATION WITH THE PATIENT, OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS AND THE HEALTH CARE TEAM.

“In many cases, people might find that the feeling of home, that sense of security and comfort and care, can be recreated in an environment that might be more safe and comforting to other family members who are caring for the patient and the patient themselves.”

I’M CAILIN RILEY, WITH A MIZZOU SPOTLIGHT ON SCIENCE.