Abstract
Rural elderly caregivers are faced with enormous barriers and obstacles that limit access to resources, information, and healthcare services. These caregivers are a high-risk vulnerable population related to caregiver strain, their increased morbidity, and mortality rate.

The purpose of this project was to develop and pilot test a caregiver resource tool aimed to improve the timely access, navigation, and coordination of community and Veterans Administration (VA) resources for rural elderly caregivers. The Che, Yeh, and Wu (2006) Conceptual Model of Self-Empowerment for Caregivers undergirded the study. Guiding questions for this project were as follows: Do rural Mississippi elderly caregivers experience difficulty navigating community and VA resources and will an investigator-designed tool, the Abernathy Caregiver Resource Care Map, enhance access and navigation of community and Veteran Administration (VA) resources?

Following an extensive literature review, the investigator-generated resource care map was developed and pilot tested among a sample of rural elderly caregivers. The setting was a rural southeast Mississippi medical center. The sample (N=5) consisted of rural elderly caregivers aged 65 and older who had been engaged in caregiving for at least 6 months or greater. A triangulated approach was used to access the experience of the caregivers and their response to the resource care map. All caregivers were selected from a rehabilitation unit. Data collection consisted of a demographic survey questionnaire, responses to a pre- and post-survey assessment on caregiving, and discussion of the caregiver role.

The findings revealed a significant difference among caregivers in the pre- and post-survey assessment related to decreased anxiety and worry regarding access, navigation, and coordination of community resources after a 30-day intervention using the Abernathy Caregiver Resource Care Map. Participants indicated improved access and being very confident using the Abernathy Caregiver Resource Care Map.

The Abernathy Caregiver Resource Care Map shows promise of a tool that Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) leaders can further develop and apply in alleviating some of the caregiver strain related to navigation and location of resources for rural elderly, and perhaps other types of caregivers, in accessing community and VA resources.