

Caring for the carer: Helping people with dementia by improving carer quality of life

Caring for a family member with dementia is associated with numerous health concerns including depression, anxiety and physical illnesses. Carer burnout leads to poorer care, and is predictive of early institutionalisation for the care recipient. There is an urgent need for programs for family carers that are comprehensive, yet tailored to individual needs.

Carer burden:

58% moderate to severe levels of stress¹

38% moderate to severe depression¹

26% moderate to severe anxiety¹

The aim of this research is to implement and evaluate the **Caring for the Carer program**, a novel, multi-component psychosocial program for dementia family carers.

Previous programs have been limited because providing education and instruction alone does not lead to successful uptake and implementation of health-related information.

This program addresses the limitations of past programs by taking a multidisciplinary, yet individualised approach

to addressing the wellbeing of family carers. It will target a range of educational, physical, social and psychological needs, utilising a behavioural change and motivational framework. The efficacy of the Caring for the Carer program will be evaluated in a Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) with community-based partner and offspring carers. Put simply, Caring for the Carer draws on the strengths of the research team in ageing to prevent people with dementia moving to residential aged

care by maintaining the wellbeing of their carers.

Dementia is the single greatest cause of disability in the lives of senior Australians. There are 332,000 Australians living with dementia, and approximately 70% of these individuals are living within the community and being cared for by family carers (AIHW, 2014, 2015). This research will impact the lives of senior Australians both providing and receiving care.



Research Leader and Partners

Professor Marita McCabe (PhD FAPS) is one of Australia's foremost clinical and research Psychologists, whose findings have shaped research directions both in Australia and internationally. Professor McCabe has led several large cluster RCTs of interventions aimed at

addressing depression and dementia in aged care, with publications contributing to our knowledge of how to improve the management of these disorders. She has specific expertise on facilitating practice change among care professionals engaged in the

management of people with depression and dementia.

The research team has ongoing research partnerships with BlueCross, Villa Maria Catholic Homes, Carers Victoria and City of Yarra.

1. Ervin et al. Australasian Journal on Ageing, Vol 34 No 4 December 2015, 235-240



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