Updated meta-review of evidence on support for carers

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Plain English summary

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Plain English summary

The need to support people who care for others on an unpaid basis (known sometimes as informal care) is now generally recognised. Effective support for carers might help to overcome difficulties relating to their physical and mental health, burden and stress, ability and knowledge to cope, and overall well-being. Good outcomes for carers may also benefit the person being cared for.

The purpose of this research was to update what is known about effective activities to support carers of ill, disabled or older adults. We did this by searching for and summarising relevant information from recent published research. We focused on high-quality reviews of research relevant to the UK health and social care system. We asked a group of carers for feedback on our overall findings.

We found that there is no ‘one size fits all’ solution for support carers. Carers of people with dementia might benefit from sharing their experiences with others, learning to think about problems differently, meditation and computer-based support. Carers of people with cancer might try art-based activities or counselling, or learn how their social surroundings can help with their feelings about problems. Counselling may also assist carers of people with stroke. There was little information on the cost-effectiveness of support for carers. Better-quality research is needed in the future, together with further work on whether or not and how respite care might help carers.
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This report

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