

Updated meta-review of evidence on support for carers

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Declared competing interests of authors: Gillian Parker has in the past received, and is currently in receipt of, a number of other research grants from the National Institute for Health Research, all won in open competition.

Published March 2017

DOI: 10.3310/hsdr05120

Plain English summary

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Health Services and Delivery Research 2017; Vol. 5: No. 12

DOI: 10.3310/hsdr05120

NIHR Journals Library www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk

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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.

Health Services and Delivery Research

ISSN 2050-4349 (Print)

ISSN 2050-4357 (Online)

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This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HS&DR programme or one of its preceding programmes as project number 13/182/07. The contractual start date was in December 2015. The final report began editorial review in July 2016 and was accepted for publication in November 2016. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HS&DR editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors' report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the final report document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

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