Non-traditional support workers delivering a brief psychosocial intervention for older people with anxiety and depression: the NOTEPAD feasibility study

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Plain English summary

The NOTEPAD feasibility study
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Plain English summary

Anxiety and depression are common in older people, but may not be identified or properly managed. Older people may not present to their general practitioner because of stigma, or because the treatments offered are not acceptable. Third (or voluntary) sector support may be more acceptable and less stigmatising.

We worked in partnership with Age UK North Staffordshire. The research study was supported by a patient and public involvement and engagement group. After talking to older people and voluntary sector workers, we developed a treatment programme, training for support workers (employed by Age UK) and materials for older people involved in a feasibility study to see if we could recruit older people from general practices. Older people who agreed to take part in the study were allocated either to receive support from one of the six support workers for depression and/or anxiety symptoms, which might include being accompanied to a local community group, or to receive care as usual from their general practices. This study did not aim to tell us whether or not the new treatment was effective.

We recruited 38 older people to the study. Older people reported that they found working with the support workers useful and that it had helped in a variety of ways. Not all older people wanted to attend a community group. The support workers found the training useful and could work with older people suffering from symptoms of anxiety and depression.

General practitioners in the participating practices recognised the need for additional care for older people with anxiety and depression, but did not feel able to provide this.

The study has given us some information about how we may further develop the support worker intervention, which could be tested in a larger trial to find out if it is effective in helping people with anxiety and depression to recover.
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