

Medication management in older people: the MEMORABLE realist synthesis

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Disclaimer: This report contains transcripts of interviews conducted in the course of the research and contains language that may offend some readers.

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Plain English summary

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Why we did this study

Older people are taking more tablets. Medication can be difficult to manage. Not everyone takes their tablets as recommended, putting them at risk and leading to waste. Helping with medication can be a big responsibility for family or friends. There are time and money pressures on practitioners.

Medication management is an increasingly important issue.

What we have done

The MEDication Management in Older people: Realist Approaches Based on Literature and Evaluation (MEMORABLE) study looked at what has been written about medication management. We listened to older people and family carers about the way they manage their medication. Doctors, nurses, pharmacists and paid carers have told us about their experiences. Everyone has made suggestions about what would make medication management better and easier.

What we found out

We now understand that medication management has different stages, such as starting new tablets or going to reviews with a doctor, nurse or pharmacist. What is done in each stage should help fit medication into older people's lives. Shared decisions about routines and goals help older people feel in control and cope.

When older people find medication a burden, they may not tell anyone. We suggest that health and care staff need a simple way, such as a couple of questions, to find out who is not coping and needs more help, advice or support.

We also understand that older people and family carers get a lot of information from health and care staff. Information may not seem relevant when it is only about one of their health problems or medications. It may be difficult to remember. We suggest that older people should have their own information, about them and all their illnesses and medications, put together in a way that they can use and share with others if they want to. This individualised information would help them to manage their medication as part of their day-to-day lives.

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