

Components, impacts and costs of dementia home support: a research programme including the DESCANT RCT

Paul Clarkson,^{1*} David Challis,² Jane Hughes,²
Brenda Roe,³ Linda Davies,⁴ Ian Russell,⁵
Martin Orrell,² Fiona Poland,⁶ David Jolley,¹
Narinder Kapur,⁷ Catherine Robinson,¹
Helen Chester,² Sue Davies,¹ Caroline Sutcliffe,¹
Julie Peconi,⁵ Rosa Pitts,⁸ Greg Fegan,⁵
Saiful Islam,⁵ Vincent Gillan,¹ Charlotte Entwistle,¹
Rebecca Beresford,¹ Michele Abendstern,¹
Clarissa Giebel,⁹ Saima Ahmed,¹ Rowan Jasper,¹⁰
Adeela Usman,¹¹ Baber Malik¹ and Karen Hayhurst⁸

¹Social Care and Society, Division of Population Health, Health Services Research and Primary Care, University of Manchester, Manchester, UK

²Institute of Mental Health, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, UK

³Evidence-based Practice Research Centre, Edge Hill University, Ormskirk, UK

⁴Health Economics Research Team, Division of Population Health, Health Services Research and Primary Care, University of Manchester, Manchester, UK

⁵Swansea University Medical School, Swansea University, Swansea, UK

⁶School of Health Sciences, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK

⁷Research Department of Clinical, Educational and Health Psychology, University College London, London, UK

⁸Division of Psychology and Mental Health, University of Manchester, Manchester, UK

⁹Institute of Population Health Sciences, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, UK

¹⁰Social Policy Research Unit, University of York, York, UK

¹¹School of Medicine, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, UK

*Corresponding author Paul.Clarkson@manchester.ac.uk

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Plain English summary

The DESCANT RCT

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Plain English summary

Background

Over half of people with dementia live at home. We identified what home support is available and what helps people with dementia and their carers. We shared findings to guide organisations.

Methods

We reviewed evidence for home support through previous research alongside a survey and costs. A trial tested whether or not guided use of memory aids helped people in the early stages of dementia. We studied the effectiveness of different approaches to home support for people in later-stage dementia. We looked at costs and consequences of possible informal and formal home support. We identified what support people with dementia and carers prefer by comparing possible combinations of available support. We identified what these would cost, their benefits and if they were cost-effective.

Results

We identified approaches that could possibly be used to support people with dementia and their carers at home. Services already available in England provided some of these approaches, but more evidence of their effectiveness is needed. Cognitive support was important for people with dementia and their carers, but less important for professionals. People with dementia valued advice on memory aids, emotional support, access to community facilities, health promotion, information and relaxation.

For the early dementia trial, daily living activities were no better for those using memory aids than for those in usual care. For later dementia, more intensive support was no more effective than basic care. However, appropriately, more vulnerable people received more intensive support. These approaches in both early and later dementia are unlikely to be cost-effective.

Conclusions

Planning care around what people with dementia prefer is important. However, our measures did not detect more subtle changes for people. We need to test the success of different measures and methods to study this in the future. More appropriate techniques for studying costs and benefits of social care will also be important.

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