

Community Occupational Therapy in Dementia intervention for people with mild to moderate dementia and their family carers in the UK: the VALID research programme including RCT

Jennifer Wenborn,^{1,2*} Gail Mountain,^{3,4}
Esme Moniz-Cook,⁵ Fiona Poland,⁶ Michael King,⁷
Rumana Omar,^{7,8} Aidan O’Keeffe,^{7,8}
Stephen Morris,⁹ Elena Pizzo,⁹ Susan Michie,¹⁰
Myrra Vernooij-Dassen,¹¹ Maud Graff,¹¹ Jane Hill,²
David Challis,¹² Ian Russell,¹³ Catherine Sackley,¹⁴
Sinéad Hynes,¹⁵ Nadia Crellin,² Jacqueline Mundy,^{2,16}
Jane Burgess,^{1,2} Tom Swinson,² Laura Di Bona,⁴
Becky Field,⁴ Cathryn Hart,¹⁷ Jacki Stansfeld,^{1,2}
Holly Walton,¹⁰ Sally Rooks,² Ritchard Ledgerd²
and Martin Orrell¹⁸

¹Division of Psychiatry, University College of London, London, UK

²Research and Development Department, North East London NHS Foundation Trust, London, UK

³Centre for Applied Dementia Studies, Faculty of Health Studies, University of Bradford, Bradford, UK

⁴School of Health and Related Research (SchARR), University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK

⁵Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Hull, Hull, UK

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

⁷Priment Clinical Trials Unit, University College London, London, UK

⁸Department of Statistical Science, University College London, London, UK

⁹Department of Applied Health Research, University College London, London, UK

¹⁰University College London Centre for Behaviour Change, Department of Clinical, Educational and Health Psychology, University College London, London, UK

¹¹Radboud University Medical Centre (Radboudumc), Nijmegen, the Netherlands

¹²Personal Social Services Research Unit, Faculty of Medical and Human Sciences, University of Manchester, Manchester, UK

¹³Medical School, Swansea University, Swansea, UK

¹⁴Department of Public Health Sciences, King’s College London, London, UK

¹⁵School of Health Sciences, National University of Ireland Galway, Galway, Ireland

¹⁶School of Health Sciences, City, University of London, London, UK

¹⁷Humber Teaching NHS Foundation Trust, Hull, UK

¹⁸Institute of Mental Health, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, UK

*Corresponding author j.wenborn@ucl.ac.uk

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Plain language summary

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Plain language summary

Maintaining everyday and meaningful activities can be difficult for a person with dementia. Their family carer/supporter can feel stressed from needing to give increasing support. Occupational therapists assist people to improve their health and well-being by helping them to do the activities that are important to them.

Dutch researchers developed an occupational therapy programme for people with mild to moderate dementia and their supporters. Delivered at home, it improved the person's ability to carry out daily activities, plus their mood and quality of life. Supporters' sense of competence, mood and quality of life also improved, and it was also value for money.

We built on this by translating and adapting the Dutch materials to develop a version better suited to the UK health and social care services context: Community Occupational Therapy in Dementia – UK version.

The Community Occupational Therapy in Dementia – UK version comprises 10 hours of occupational therapy provided at home over 10 weeks. We tested whether or not it was more beneficial in terms of helping people with dementia to continue with activities and improving mood and quality of life than the usual service provided (treatment as usual), which may or may not include occupational therapy. In total, 468 pairs comprising a person with dementia and their supporter agreed to take part. Pairs were allocated at random to receive either The Community Occupational Therapy in Dementia – UK version or treatment as usual. We asked questions about daily activities performance, quality of life, mood, and the health and social care services used. We did this at the beginning of the programme and again at 12, 26, 52 and 78 weeks.

The statistical analysis showed no evidence that Community Occupational Therapy in Dementia – UK version benefited the pairs on the outcomes selected or was value for money compared with the usual care already provided. We spoke in depth to some of the pairs and occupational therapists who participated in Community Occupational Therapy in Dementia – UK version, and they provided positive examples of meaningful activities that they had resumed or established as a result of the programme.

Future research should develop ways of measuring the outcomes that really matter to people with dementia and their supporters, and to collect the views of people with dementia themselves.

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