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Evaluation Of Alzheimer's Australia's Early Stage Dementia Support And Respite Program (ESDSRP) For People With Dementia And For Their Carers.

Abstract

Alzheimer's Australia administers a national, Commonwealth funded program that offers a time-limited education and support program to people with early stage dementia (who still have some insight into their condition) and their carers. A condition of its funding required that the program be evaluated scientifically. This has posed several methodological challenges. For example, traditional methodologies used by drug trials, ie no-treatment placebo, are both irrelevant to and unfeasible for ESDSRP. At least 25 years of research has produced only equivocal evidence of the efficacy of support groups, even for cognitively intact carers, in any measure other than ratings of satisfaction. Underlying these issues is the unreliability of self-report inherent in people who have dementing illnesses. This paper outlines an alternative methodology, and presents the encouraging results to date.

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