



Title Does Befriending by Trained Lay Workers Improve Psychological Well-Being and Quality of Life for Carers of People with Dementia, and at What Cost? A Randomized Controlled Trial

Agency NETSCC, HTA, NIHR Evaluation and Trials Coordinating Centre
Alpha House, University of Southampton Science Park, Southampton, SO16 7NS, United Kingdom;
Tel: +44 2380 595 586, Fax: +44 2380 595 639; hta@soton.ac.uk, www.hta.ac.uk

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Aim

1) To determine whether social support intervention (usual care plus access to an employed befriending facilitator) is effective compared to usual care alone; and
2) To document direct and indirect costs in the intervention and control groups and establish incremental cost effectiveness.

Conclusions and results

Of 316 people expressing interest in participating, 236 (75%) were randomized into the trials (116 intervention; 120 controls). At the main endpoint (15 months postrandomization) 202 carers (96 interventions; 106 controls) were still involved in the trial (14% attrition). There was no evidence of effectiveness or cost effectiveness from the primary analyses on the intention-to-treat population. The mean incremental cost per incremental QALY gained was in excess of 100 000 pounds sterling (GBP), with only a 42.2% probability of being below GBP 30 000 per QALY gained. Analyses on secondary outcomes were similarly negative, and there was no evidence of cost effectiveness in the alternative scenarios considered, except where care-recipient QALYs were included. In this case, the mean incremental cost per incremental QALY gained was GBP 26 848, with a 51.4% probability of being below GBP 30 000 per QALY gained. Only 60 carers (52%) took up the offer of being matched with a trained, lay befriender. Of these, only 37 (32%) were befriended for 6 months or more. A subgroup analysis of controls versus those befriended for 6+ months found a reduction in HADS-depression scores that approached statistical significance. The target duration for befriending relationships was 6 months or longer.

Recommendations

Access to a befriender facilitator is neither an effective nor a cost-effective intervention in supporting carers of people with dementia, although there is a suggestion of cost-effectiveness for the care-dyad (carer and care recipient).

Methods

For further details see www.nchta.org/execsumm/summ1204.shtml.

Further research/reviews required

Additional research is required to establish: characteristics of carers most likely to take up befriending; befriender-carer characteristics of successful matches; interplay between statutory and voluntary support services and support from families; carer wellbeing in the context of receipt of befriending, and placement of care recipients in long-term residential/nursing care.

Future cost-effectiveness evaluations of carer support should include outcomes for both the carer and care recipient. Further work is required on economic methods for carer intervention research.