

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE: SUPPORT FOR CARERS

Productive Ageing Centre **National Seniors Australia**

As people become older, it is not unusual for them to experience periods of depression and anxiety. People who are looking after those with Alzheimer's disease or other types of dementia can also feel overwhelmed and require support. *Denise Wissmann (Senior Clinician, Alzheimers's Australia Vic)*, a key speaker at the Productive Ageing Forum spoke about depression and anxiety in older people and the support that is available for carers.



Caring for people with dementia is sometimes a struggle because dementia progresses at different rates for different people and other medical conditions (such as depression, hearing and vision loss, arthritis and infections) can make dementia worse. Denise pointed out that even though people often look the same as they did before, dementia may change the way they think, cause problems with remembering recent events, affect how a person with dementia communicates and make them unable to understand another person's point of view. All these changes can make caring for people with dementia difficult.

Support for people with dementia and their carers

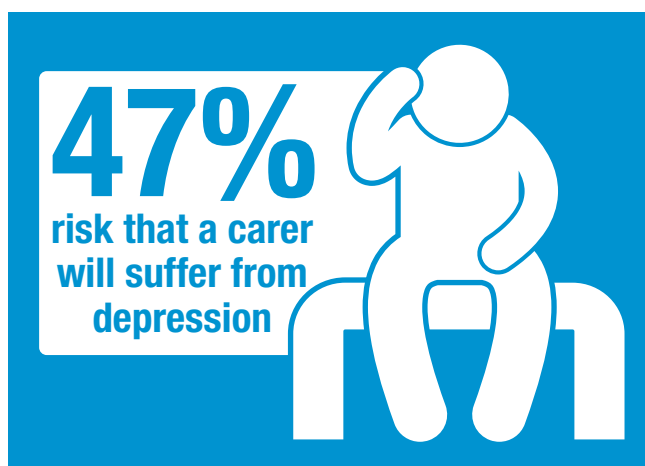
Carers face many challenges when looking after a person with dementia. There is a 47% risk that carers will suffer from depression. As most people with dementia live at home, carers may find that life is unpredictable. A GP can monitor the health and assess the person with dementia. There is also a cognitive dementia and memory service (CDAMS) that can help with diagnosis. CDAMS are located throughout Melbourne and in regional areas. Your GP can give you a referral or you can contact your local CDAMS directly.

Many support services are available for those caring for someone with dementia. The Aged Care Assessment Service (ACAS)¹ can establish the level of care and

support that is required. This can include support at home and respite care (in and away from home). Local councils also offer support for carers. Counselling services are also available for those with dementia or carers who would like to discuss their challenges with someone.

Information on CDAMS and the location of the nearest service is available at health.vic.gov.au/subacute/cdams.htm

Information on ACAS and how they determine the level of care or support that is required is available at myagedcare.gov.au/eligibility-and-assessment/acat-assessments



¹ In states other than Victoria, the Aged Care Assessment Service (ACAS) is known as the Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT).

Tips for caring for someone with dementia

Denise offered some tips for caring with people with dementia. “There is no simple rule. Everyone does it in their own way but it is important not to do it on your own,” she said.

Getting as much information as possible and sharing this information with family, friends and neighbours involved in the care of the person with dementia may make a difference. Denise suggested that accepting help sooner rather than later can make life easier. She also said that it is important to be gentle with yourself and the person with dementia. “Don’t beat yourself up if you lose it or get angry,” she said.

At times caring for someone with dementia will be frustrating. Patience and humour go a long way. Denise said. “Try to see the funny side of things”.

Denise ended her presentation with a reminder that when caring for people with dementia is it important to remember that just because they cannot remember an activity does not diminish their enjoyment of it at the time.

Information on Alzheimer’s, dementia and support services is available at the National Dementia Helpline 1800 100 500 or at fightdementia.org.au

Further details on support services for carers can be found at:

Carer’s Australia

carersaustralia.com.au

(02) 6122 9900

Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres

health.gov.au/ccsd/

1800 052 222

My Aged Care

myagedcare.gov.au

1800 100 500

This fact sheet was developed using information provided by Denise Wissman (Senior Clinician, Alzheimer’s Australia) in her presentation on Alzheimer’s Disease: Support for Carers at the Productive Ageing Forum 2014.

