Reviewer’s report

Title: General practice based psychosocial interventions support carers of people with dementia or stroke: a systematic review

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Reviewer: Janet Hanley

Reviewer’s report:

This paper reports a systematic review of interventions provided in General Practice to support informal carers of people who suffer from stroke or Alzheimer’s disease. In their introduction they make it clear that there have been previous studies and reviews of such interventions, but not with the specification that the interventions are provided within General Practice which is an important source of support to carers.

The search strategy is provided and the protocol had been pre-registered. However, this search strategy yielded only 4 papers, three from the US and 1 from Spain, all related to interventions to support carers of dementia sufferers. The studies are appropriately reviewed with a narrative synthesis. The paper is clearly written.

My main concern with this paper is the appropriateness of the very narrow focus of the question and this limitation is not addressed in the discussion. Interventions do not have to be provided in General Practice to be accessible to carers via General Practice, so for service planners reviews of the wider literature will be more relevant. I am not surprised that no papers from the UK were found as from my primary care clinical perspective I would not really expect General Practices to be providing such interventions although I would expect them to be available in a wider service context. I would expect trials and other studies to reflect that. I am also concerned that, from a UK perspective, the search terms used may have missed any studies of community-based interventions provided by mental health services, stroke specialist nurses, health visitors or voluntary agencies, all of which would be seen as being in a wider ‘primary care’ context and may even be provided within the same health centres as GP practices.

I have found it difficult to review this paper using the usual criteria. The authors have done what they set out to do, used appropriate methods and reported it clearly, but they have limited themselves to such a narrow focus that little research was found and the value of the synthesis is consequently limited. I think that this needs to be addressed in the discussion and

1. research into interventions provided by General Practice more clearly put into the context of the range of interventions available to carers of stroke and dementia sufferers

2. Consideration should be given to whether the search terms used may have failed to identify studies of interventions provided close to general practice by other agencies.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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