Reviewer’s report

Title: Evidence of what works to support and sustain care at home for people with dementia: a literature review

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Reviewer: Frances Bunn

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Title: Evidence of what works to support and sustain care at home for people with dementia: a literature review

Major essential revisions

1. Structure of the paper – the paper does not follow a conventional structure and is at time rather confusing to follow. There is information in the background that I feel should be in the methods section and information in the results that would be better in a discussion section. At present there is no discussion section but a very long results section. Some of the results section around implications of the findings and gaps in the evidence would seem to fit better into a discussion.

2. Focus/reach of the paper. The authors do a commendable job of covering a wide range of literature. However, at time the scope of the paper is a little unclear and the breadth makes the results feel a little superficial.

3. Methodological approach. The authors say that this is a literature review however I think they need more detail about the approach they took. Are they drawing on any particular methods? For instance, I think it needs to be more explicit if this is a systematic review, a scoping review, or a rapid review. As they have used systematic approaches to searching and critical appraisal I was wondering why they did not do a systematic review?

4. Inclusion criteria. The authors give some details about the inclusion criteria for the review (in the background and in the methods). However, this needs to be clearer. For example, what study types did they include? Have they included literature relating to nursing homes? Certainly some of the literature relates to nursing homes but I am not sure how this fits with their focus on ‘care at home’. What is their definition of care at home?

5. Search strategy. The authors appear to have used a comprehensive range of search terms. They do not, however, describe any lateral searches such as citation searching or contacting experts. Such searches may be particularly useful for looking for non-randomised studies. It is also not clear if the aim of the review was to find all available literature or a representative sample. Whilst they have included a large volume of studies it is clear that there are relevant studies they have not included. I am not sure if this is because they missed studies or because they were not aiming to include all literature. This needs to be clarified in the methods section.
6. Quality assessment. The authors reference the various checklists they drew on for quality assessment but they do not say what the specific criteria were that they used for each study type or how they arrived at their classifications of high, medium and low. This information needs to be included somewhere in the paper (perhaps in an additional table).

7. Findings. The authors give very little detail about how they analysed or interpreted study findings. How did they assess the significance of the findings? Also whilst Table 3 shows the number of studies in each category it is not clear what study types they were (for example RCTs, uncontrolled studies, reviews etc). This makes it difficult to interpret the findings. For example on page 13 they say there is 'compelling evidence' but this is difficult for the reader to judge.

8. Overview of literature – I think this section should include not just the number of included studies but also what type of studies they were. For example how many RCTs, reviews etc Also I think the paper would benefit from some sort of tabular summary of the evidence.

9. Abstract – I know it is challenging to summarise such a large amount of literature but the results and conclusions sections of the abstract are not very informative. What are the implications for practice?

10. Background – this section is quite short and the first and last paragraph are not supported by any references. The information in Table 1 would be better in the methods section as part of the inclusion criteria. The background should also be made more international.

11. Conclusions . Limitations of the review are considered briefly in the conclusions. This should be a section in the discussion and should be considered more fully.

Minor essential revisions

1. Table 3. It would be good to include the study types in this table as well as quality and topic.

2. Page 4 – the authors say the analysis was shaped by feedback from project workshops. I think they need to provide more detail about this. How did it shape the analysis and who was involved in the workshops?

3. Table 3 – having community based support as a topic and subtopic is rather confusing. How do they differ?

4. Page 9 – at the bottom of page 9 the authors write that ‘newly emerging concerns for the field of dementia care have been identified. They do not specify what these are. This also seems to be discussion rather than findings.

5. P10 – paragraph beginning ‘existing literature’ - this seems like discussion not findings. Moreover, it is not supported by any references.

6. P11 – emerging issues – Case management is introduced in this paragraph but has not been discussed elsewhere. I am also not sure why it is in the section on hospitals and not in the community section.

7. P11- the authors point out that there is a lack of literature relating to people
who do not have informal carers. I think this is an important point.

8. P14 – paragraph on integrated care beginning ‘in some cases’ is 46 the right reference here?

Desirable revisions

1. Supplementary document. This is rather a long table at present. I don’t think it is necessary to include quite such a detailed summary of each study. It could be summarised more but with an additional column showing study type and country.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

none known