

### Meeting community needs on dementia care through integrative social-health interventions: The 'Caring for the Caregiver' project

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**Objectives:** *Caring for the Caregiver* ([www.cuidardequemcuida.com](http://www.cuidardequemcuida.com)) is a large community-based project that takes place in five Portuguese northern municipalities (EDV region) and aims to provide useful services for informal carers within an integrative social-health approach. This presentation provides an overview of its major intervention initiatives, efforts and constraints in providing such integrative approach. A special focus is played on its psychoeducational intervention program.

**Methods:** A brief overview of the Project's main initiatives is presented (psychoeducational groups; support groups; professional training on dementia care; local volunteer's network involvement; respite care services diagnosis; discussion forums and high school partnerships) followed by a description of the establishment of a psychoeducational intervention program and its main available outcomes.

**Results:** Currently the project involves 46 professionals from all five municipalities and 25 partnerships including City Councils, Health Centers, a Hospital, Social Solidarity Private Institutions, Volunteer's Institutions and the Region's Department of Employment. To the moment 190 informal caregivers have been enrolled in the project; 120 participated in the psychoeducational program and are being closely monitored. The need for continuity of professional support (health and/or social) was found to be crucial for most carers. Perceived benefits and limitations of the program are presented.

**Discussion:** Albeit collaboration between various professionals and institutions tend to be difficult due to geographic, economic and human resources constraints, it results mostly due to the globally perceived lack of available responses to this population's needs in the region. An integrative social-health intervention seems to be the best way of overcoming local services limitations without compromising the specific support informal caregivers need.

**Conclusion:** Integration between social and health organizations represent a crucial process to answer the caregivers' needs and must be supported by relevant decision makers and significant partners. A strong network of partners is crucial for the sustainability of the project. Raising public awareness on informal caregiving issues is required and to be continued.

### Empowering staff in dementia long-term care: A psychoeducational approach

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**Objectives:** The increasing demand for higher quality services in dementia care highlights the need to address the psychological pressure experienced by staff, as this may affect the process of caring for residents with dementia. Several training interventions have been conducted aiming to provide staff with knowledge and skills regarding dementia care. However, the provision of emotional support is scarce despite staff well-reported stress and burnout. This pilot-study aimed to evaluate the middle term effects of a psycho-educational programme for staff caring for residents with dementia.

**Methods:** Six staff members of a care home received eight psycho-educational group sessions and individualised assistance during the provision of morning care to six residents with advanced stages of dementia. The intervention aimed to support staff on: increasing knowledge and skills in dementia care (e.g., motor and multisensory stimulation); and managing the emotional strain resulting from caring in dementia. An audio-recorded focus-group interview with staff was conducted after the programme and submitted to content analysis by two independent judges. Video-recordings of residents' behaviours during morning care were performed pre- and post-intervention. Each tape was analysed by two independent observers who were blinded to the phase of intervention (pre/post).

**Results:** Five major categories related to staff perceived benefits have emerged: acquisition of new knowledge; group cohesion; demystification of pre-existing beliefs; self-worth feelings; and positive coping. Although not statistically significant, a trend towards improvements at residents' interaction behaviours was found.

**Discussion:** The findings suggest that interventions leading to perceptions of increased competence and to feelings of being attended in emotional needs might enhance staff engagement in providing adequate care. However, these promising results are limited by the pilot nature of the study. Thus, investigating the extent of these benefits in larger samples, with a controlled study design is recommended.

**Conclusion:** Interventions that attend to both educational and supportive needs of staff can be a promising approach to improve the quality of dementia care and the well-being of both staff and residents.