

Carer influences on 'living well' for people with dementia: Findings from the IDEAL study

Family carers are family members or friends of people with dementia who play an important role in providing support and care. Because of this supportive relationship it is possible that what the family carer is experiencing could have an influence on the overall well-being of the person with dementia. In this study we explored the impact of the carer's experiences on the ability of the person with dementia to 'live well' with the condition.

For this study we used information provided by 1283 people with dementia and their carers who had taken part in the IDEAL study. The IDEAL study follows a group of people with dementia and carers over time, looking at what helps people to 'live well' with dementia.

We measured "living well" by asking people with dementia to complete questionnaires on their:

- Quality of life
- Well-being
- Satisfaction with life

The carers completed questionnaires on:

- Whether they were experiencing any care-related **stress**
- Their feelings of **competence** (or adequacy) in their role as a carer
- Whether they identified any **positive aspects of providing care**
- Whether they perceived any **social restrictions**
- How well they were **coping** as a carer

We then analysed this information to find out whether the carers' experiences were related to the way in which people with dementia evaluated their own quality of life, well-being, and satisfaction with life.

Where carers were highly stressed, lacked a feeling of being competent in the caring role, and experienced social restrictions, the people they cared for rated their quality of life, well-being, and satisfaction with life less positively. How well carers felt they were coping, and whether carers could identify positive aspects of their caring role, did not make a difference to the way in which the people they cared for rated their quality of life, well-being and satisfaction with life.

This shows that what family carers are experiencing is important, not just for their own well-being, but also for the well-being of the person with dementia for whom they provide care, and helps us to understand what kinds of support may be most helpful for family carers. It is vital to ensure that family carers are supported both emotionally and practically in order to reduce stress levels and increase feelings of competence, and that they are able to access help when needed. This will both benefit family carers and improve the potential for 'living well' among the people with dementia for whom they provide care.

This is a summary of a [research article](#) which appeared in the **Aging & Mental Health** journal in September 2020.