
Respite care for people with dementia and their carers

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Authors' objectives

Background: Caring for someone with dementia can be emotionally and physically demanding. Respite care is any intervention designed to give rest or relief to caregivers. It is not clear what positive and negative effects such care may have on them, or on people with dementia. Objectives: To assess the benefits and harms of respite care for people with dementia and their caregivers, in particular the effect of respite care on rates of institutionalisation. Search methods: The trials were identified from a search of ALOIS, the Specialized Register of the Cochrane Dementia and Cognitive Improvement Group, using the terms respite* OR daycare OR caregiver* relief. ALOIS contains up-to-date records from all major healthcare databases and many ongoing trial databases. Selection criteria: Randomised controlled trials comparing respite care with a control intervention for people with dementia. Data collection and analysis: Two review authors carried out study selection independently and reached a consensus through discussion. Data were extracted by a single review author. The review authors contacted all investigators for methodological details not reported in the text and for additional data for three studies included in the previous version of the review. Main results: Four trials are now included in the review, with 753 participants. They were different in many ways including the intervention, duration, outcomes and control group so pooling of data was not possible. Overall, the quality of the evidence was rated as very low. Re-analysis of outcomes using data from the published studies found no significant effects of respite care compared to no respite care on any caregiver variable. When respite care was compared to polarity therapy a significant effect was found in favour of polarity therapy for caregiver perceived stress ($n = 38$, MD 5.80, 95% CI 1.43 to 10.17), but not for other measures of psychological health and other caregiver outcomes. No studies reported evaluable data on outcomes related to the people with dementia. Authors' conclusions: Current evidence does not demonstrate any benefits or adverse effects from the use of respite care for people with dementia or their caregivers. These results should be treated with caution, however, as they may reflect the lack of high quality research in this area rather than an actual lack of benefit. Given the frequency with which respite care is advocated and provided, well-designed trials are needed in this area. US: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD004396.pub3/abstract>

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