

Introducing the Tailored Activity Program to the Australian health context: A pilot study of an occupational therapy program for people with dementia and their carers

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Introduction: Community dementia care in Australia is fragmented, with little access to tailored, systematic interventions. Yet most people with dementia live at home and carers experience high burden.

Objective: We conducted a pilot randomised trial of the Tailored Activity Program (TAP), which teaches the carer how to engage their family member in activity with the aim of reducing challenging behaviours.

Method: Persons with dementia and their primary carer were recruited from various community groups and dementia services. Measures were collected by blinded assessors at 4 and 8 month. Major outcomes included five domains of the Neuropsychiatric Inventory- Clinician rating (apathy, agitation, depression, sleep and irritability) and carer burden.

Results: We recruited 66 dyads, with 54 followed at 8 months. Diagnosis were Alzheimer's Disease (n=36), FTD (n=20), Vascular (n=4), mixed (n=4) and 2 no formal diagnosis (n=2). Mean age was 73.4 years and 62% were men. Of the carers, 65% were a spouse and most lived with the person with dementia (95%). Mean MoCA score at baseline was 26.59 (SD 2.27; range 20 to 30). Results show some positive trends though sample sizes limit significant results. There were small effect sizes for the total number of behaviours (cohen's d =0.25) and the level of burden experienced by the carer (cohen's d=0.39) and a moderate effect size for hours spent caring by the caregiver (cohen's d=0.55), favouring the TAP participants.

Conclusion: The TAP program can successfully be delivered in multiple contexts and countries and delivered to persons with different types of dementia.