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# Carer mental health



## Mental Health Inventory scores

- Clinical levels of depression in 19% ♀ and 13% ♂ carers
- 51% ♀ and 30.7% ♂ carers reported depressive episodes of 6 months or more since they started caring
- Partners, parents and offspring of carers also experience high levels of depression

AIFS (2008) – The Nature and Impact of Caring for Family Members with a Disability in Australia

# Carer physical health



## Self-rated health status

- Overall 2x carers in poor physical health than general population
- 28.5% ♀ carers compared with general population (18.3%)
- 31.7% ♂ carers compared with general population (15.9%)

AIFS (2008) – The Nature and Impact of Caring for Family Members with a Disability in Australia

## Carers are consumers too



More than a third of Australia's 2.7 million carers live with their own chronic illness or disability and many older carers spend more than 10 hours a day on health-related activity, caring for both others and themselves

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2015) Catalogue Number 4430.0 - Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia

Jowsey, T, McRae, I, Gillespie, J, Banfield, M, & Yen, L. (2013) *Time to care? Health of informal older carers and time spent on health-related activities: an Australian survey*. BMC Public Health 2013;13:374

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# The double burden of disease



## Carers chronic health challenges

Chronic conditions results : SAMSS

Carers compared with non-carers more likely to report

- 49% - Asthma
- 43% - Diabetes
- 40% - COPD
- 34% - Arthritis
- 34% - Mental health conditions
- 29% - CVD

Stacey, A., Gill, T. and Price, K. (2017), A Report Card on Carer Health in SA, The University of Adelaide

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# Self care for carers

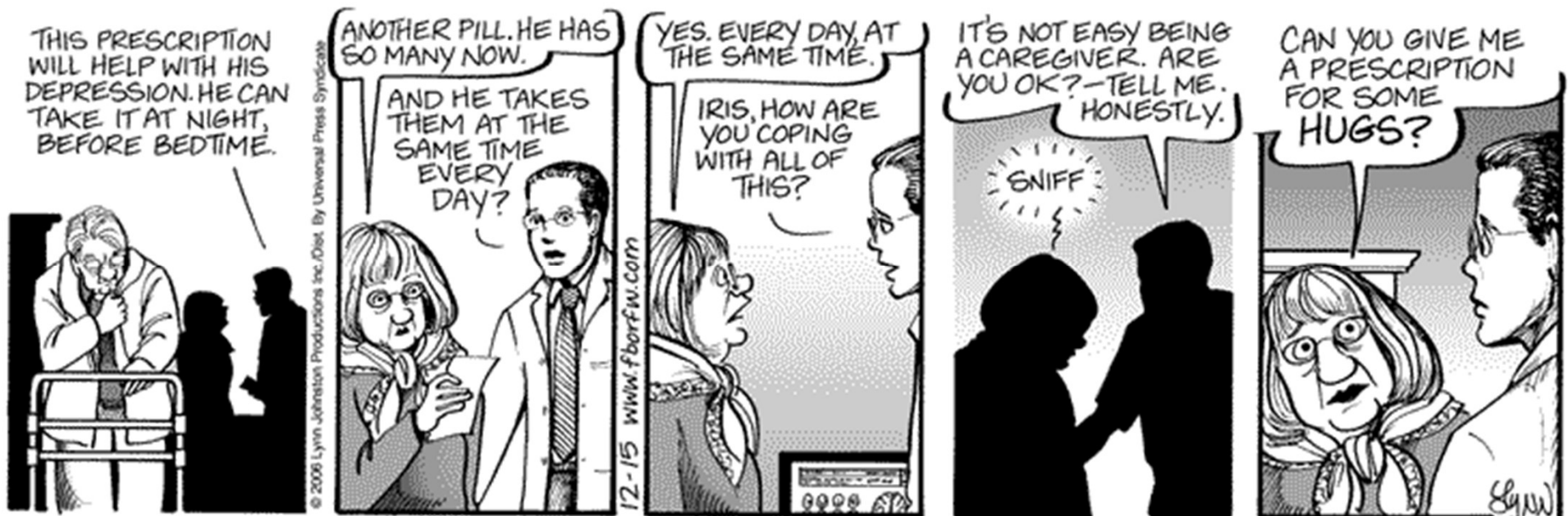


## Barriers to carer self care



- Lack of recognition of impacts of caring
- Time and resource constraints
- Guilt, duty, obligation
- Family, cultural and community expectations
- Carers own beliefs and values
- Loss and grief
- Balancing other responsibilities
- Lack of insight/resistance of person receiving care

# Assessing and helping carers





# Health professional care



Coordinating a team-based approach to care that includes and supports carers, involves:

- Recognising the importance of organised and structured care planning involving carers and other family members as part of the multi-disciplinary team
- Considering how your patient's illness may be affecting his or her carers' health (from a medical, social and financial perspective)
- Identifying the implications for carers of any changes made to your patients' management plans

UK Royal College of General Practitioners (2014) Involving and Supporting Carers and Families  
An educational framework and learning resource for GPs and primary care teams

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# MBS items to assess and manage carer health



## Health Assessments

- 45 - 49 year old Health Checks
- 75+ Health Check

- Chronic Disease Management (CDM) various items
- GP Mental Health Treatment Plan

# Identifying carers



## Hidden carers of people with long-term conditions

- Don't recognise themselves as carers
- Comparisons to 'real' carers
- Most focus is on carers of very dependent people
- Desire to protect the cared-for person's identity as independent
- 'Hidden' caring in the context of self-management of long term conditions at home
- Health professionals can help **legitimise** the carer role and **signpost** them to support

Knowles, S., Combs, R., Kirk, S., Griffiths, M., Patel, N., & Sanders, C. (2016). Hidden caring, hidden carers? Exploring the experience of carers for people with long-term conditions. *Health & Social Care In The Community*, 24(2), 203-213. doi:10.1111/hsc.12207

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# Recommendations for policy and health service delivery



- Recognition of the double burden of disease
- Routine assessment of carer needs
- MBS item for carer health assessments
- Targeted support to high intensity carers living with chronic illness
- Additional investment in formal care, including respite care to free up carers for self care activities
- Measurement of quality of life and health outcomes of carers
- Further research on effectiveness of carer health interventions

## Current State

Government funded carer programs currently administered by the Department of Social Services

- Consumer Directed Respite Care
- Commonwealth Respite & Carelink Centres
- National Carer Counselling Program
- Carer Information & Support Services
- Dementia Education & Training for Carers
- Counselling Support, Information & Advocacy: Carer Support
- Young Carers – Education Support & Information, Advice and Referral
- Young Carer Bursary\*

- Young Carers: Direct Respite
- Respite Support for Carers of Young People with a Severe or Profound Disability
- Mental Health Respite: Carer Support



## Future State

Funding



Current program funding will transition to Carer Gateway in September 2019.

Carer Gateway services include:

- Digital Counselling
- In-Person Counselling
- Carer Online Resources
- Online Carer Coaching
- In-Person Carer Coaching
- Online Peer Support
- In-Person Peer Support
- Carer Directed Support
- Emergency Respite

*\*Young Carer Bursary program will continue to be administered separately.*

Funding



Current program funding will transition to the NDIS by 30 June 2019.

# Integrated Carer Support Service

# References



Australian Bureau of Statistics (2015) Catalogue Number 4430.0 - Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia

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UK Royal College of General Practitioners, (2014). Involving and Supporting Carers and Families. An educational framework and learning resource for GPs and primary care teams



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