

Prioritising carers' health and wellbeing in the healthcare system

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Approximately 10% of Australians provide unpaid care to family or friends living with chronic illness or disability, saving \$77.9 billion in healthcare expenditure in 2020 alone.

Carers experience negative impacts on their physical, mental, social and financial status as a result of their caring role. However, limited support in the community is resulting in poor health and wellbeing outcomes for carers.

Change in the healthcare system is needed to support carers' health and wellbeing, which in turn will facilitate care in the community and reduce the burden on the healthcare system.

Expansions to existing systems and healthcare standards and principles can be made to include carers as separate consumers, to identify their areas of need and to guide government allocation of fundings and services.

Recommendations

- Develop a nationally implemented framework for assessing carers' outcomes during clinical encounters that will assist service referrals and monitor wellbeing. Comprehensive data related to carers' wellbeing, service use, and clinicians' knowledge of carer assessments are needed to inform allocation of government spending and distribution of services for carers.
- Co-design a health care system that includes carers and is fit for purpose. Current healthcare standards and principles, and models of care must acknowledge and support carers as separate consumers who have unique needs.
- Implement strategies to support change including education for practicing clinicians and undergraduates; and the allocation of MBS funding to conduct care assessments and fund support services across primary, secondary, and tertiary healthcare.
- Implement a permanent and ongoing evaluation to ensure that carers' health and wellbeing continue to be supported and that government funding is optimised. These data should be collected two-yearly, similar to current nationwide health and wellbeing data.

