

Caring for Carers: Depression, Anxiety and the Impact of Caring

There are nearly 2.6 million people in Australia who are carers. Carers provide unpaid care and support to people who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness or who are frail. These people may not call themselves 'carers'; they are partners, parents, siblings, relatives, other family members and/or friends. Carers come from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. They may be working or studying, as well as providing care. They may be any age. Caring can be a demanding role that requires mental and physical energy, commitment and dedication.

Carers in outer regional and remote areas experience higher rates of disability or a long-term health condition themselves, and are more likely to experience financial hardship than carers in major cities. Indigenous people in rural and remote Australia are also more likely to be carers than non-Indigenous people in these areas.

Caring for a person with a mental illness has particular challenges. The episodic nature of mental illness, the stigma still associated with it, the symptoms of the illness, and the struggle to obtain appropriate treatment and care for a family member or friend, can all contribute to a carer feeling overwhelmed. Carers need strategies to manage these challenges. Their experiences can predispose carers to mental illness themselves. In 2007, carers were found to have the lowest wellbeing of any large group recorded by the Australian Unity Wellbeing Index in *The Wellbeing of Australians: Carer Health and Wellbeing*.

This program covers two main areas.

- Firstly, it discusses the experiences and particular challenges for carers supporting a person with mental health problems. The importance of carers as part of the care team, and useful strategies for supporting a person with a mental illness are included.
- Secondly, the program acknowledges the impact of caring on the carer's physical and mental health. It assists health practitioners to develop practical ways to support and encourage carers to look after themselves. Support, counselling and respite services are also examined.

Learning Outcomes for this program:

At the end of this program viewers will be able to:

- Describe the impact of caring on physical and mental health
- Assist a carer to develop strategies for supporting a person with depression, anxiety or a related disorder
- Outline practical self-care ideas for carers
- Refer carers to appropriate carer support, counselling and respite services.

Panel of Speakers

Chair: Dr Norman Swan: Presenter of the *Health Report* on ABC Radio National

Ms Josephine Battaglini: Social Worker, Royal Darwin Hospital, NT

Mr John McGrath: Carer, Deputy Chairman, *beyondblue*, VIC

Dr Christopher Mitchell: General Practitioner, President, RACGP, NSW

Ms Linda Rosie: Project Manager, Mental Health Council of Australia, ACT

This program is accredited or endorsed for professional development by RACGP, ACRRM, RCNA and APA.

[Find a Satellite viewing site](#)

Broadcast details

Tuesday 29th June 2010

Live satellite broadcast (on Channel 4) at:

- 8.00pm in ACT, NSW, TAS, QLD & VIC
- 7.30pm in SA & NT
- 6.00pm in WA

(broadcast repeated in WA on Channel 23 at 8.00pm)

This program can be webstreamed after the broadcast and will also be available as an audio podcast or downloadable audio MP3 file and DVD.

Friday 2nd July 2010

Repeat satellite broadcast on Channel 23 at:

- 12.30pm in ACT, NSW, TAS, QLD & VIC
- 12 noon in SA & NT
- 10.30am in WA