A Hard Day’s Night
The carer strain experienced by the friends and family of older people with mental health problems.

Photos provided by Hannah Fox

This presentation presents independent research commissioned by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) under its Programme Grants for Applied Research funding scheme (RP-PG-0407-10147). The views expressed in this presentation are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the NHS, the NIHR or the Department of Health.
Summary

- Explain the purpose, methods and findings of the Medical Crisis in Older People – Better Mental Health Cohort Study.
- Discuss the health problems of patient participants.
- Describe the carer well-being in terms of strain, and psychological health during the patient participant’s hospital admission.
The Medical Crisis in Older People – Better Mental Health Cohort Study

Aims:

To investigate the current prevalence of mental health problems of inpatients aged 70 and over admitted to general hospital and their psychiatric symptoms, behaviour and functional abilities.

To describe the carers of the patients and to establish their levels of strain, psychological health, and quality of life.

To provide information for the development of a specialist medical and mental health unit.
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Recruitment

1004 screened

Mental health problems 643

250 patients recruited
201 carers recruited

5 patients withdrew

245 Patient outcomes

147 patients with capacity declined consent
108 research team unable to contact carer before discharge
unable to contact carer
61 no carer consultee in patients with no capacity
48 carers declined consultee agreement in patients with no capacity
21 other
8 too ill

No mental health problems 377

201 carers recruited

Medical Crises in Older People

National Institute for Health Research

The University of Nottingham
## Mental Health Problems of Patients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental Health Problems</th>
<th>Total n=250</th>
<th>Estimated prevalence for over 70</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Impairment</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delirium</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnosed dementia</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Functional Problems of the Patient

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cognitive Impairment</th>
<th>No Cognitive Impairment</th>
<th>Total n=250</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incontinence</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with Feeding</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervised walking</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk of Malnutrition</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Behavioural and Psychiatric Problems of Patients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cognitive Impairment</th>
<th>No Cognitive Impairment</th>
<th>Total n=250</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delusions</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallucinations</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agitation/ Aggression</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apathy</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor Behaviour</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is a carer?

- A carer is a friend or family member who provides regular help and support to another adult who has a long-term physical or mental health problem or problems related to old age.
Baseline Measurements of Carers

- Age
- Relationship to the patient
- Hours of company given per day
- Hours of physical care per day
- Carer’s strain
- Carer’s general health
Ages of Carers

![Bar chart showing the distribution of carer participant ages. The y-axis represents the percentage, ranging from 0% to 40%. The x-axis represents the carer participant age (years), ranging from 20 to 100 years. The chart peaks around the age of 60 years.](image-url)
Relationship of Carer to Patient

- Son/Daughter: 52%
- Spouse: 25%
- Other: 23%

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# Hours of Company Per Day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Carer lives elsewhere to patient</th>
<th>Carer lives with patient</th>
<th>Patient lives in care home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hours: median (range)</td>
<td>2 (0.3 - 4)</td>
<td>24 (14 - 24)</td>
<td>0 (0 - 0.6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hours of Physical Care Per Day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Carer lives elsewhere to patient</th>
<th>Carer lives with patient</th>
<th>Patient lives in care home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hours: median (range)</td>
<td>2 (0.3 - 4)</td>
<td>18 (4 - 24)</td>
<td>0 (0 - 0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Carer Strain Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carer lives elsewhere to patient</th>
<th>Carer lives with patient</th>
<th>Patient lives in care home</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing high levels of carer strain</td>
<td>37 (50%)</td>
<td>30 (49%)</td>
<td>11 (23%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Issues of Caring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Total n=201</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caring is confining</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is a physical strain</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family adjustments</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in person is upsetting</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel overwhelmed</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Carer strain in an acute hospital setting

• Medical issues
• Uncertainty about the patient’s prognosis
• Emotion disruption
• Routines disrupted
• Difficulty getting information from staff
• Staff not understanding dementia
What is being done?

Medical and Mental Health Unit (MMHU) – a specialist ward for older people with confusion.

- Additional specialist staff
- Additional training
- Involvement of mental health trust
- Person centred care
- Ward environment
- Provision of activities
Support for carers

- Inclusive, person centred care
- ‘About me’ and ‘Caring together’
- Proactive communication
- Relaxed approach to visiting times
- Sitting, mealtimes
- Respecting legal rights of carers in decision making
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Any questions?
Acknowledgements

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