

HealthPathways Melbourne Community
Resource Project – Carer Consultation
*Understanding carers’
needs from the GP perspective*



As part of the HealthPathways Melbourne Community Resource Project conducted between February and June 2015, fifty carers were consulted; 44 by survey and 6 within a focus group.

The purpose of the consultation was to obtain feedback from carers regarding which community based services for carers and patients are appropriate for General Practitioners (GPs) to refer their patients to.

The information collected during the carer consultation process led to the addition of resources and support services on the HealthPathways Melbourne website as well as increased understanding of the issues faced by carers, the services they find most helpful and what they want from their GPs to help sustain them in their caring role.

The most challenging aspects of being a carer included:

- dealing with the symptoms of the care recipient's condition
- managing physical tasks
- the relentless nature of the role and loss of the carer's own life
- emotional stress
- financial stress
- difficulty accessing and navigating services
- social isolation
- fear of what happens to the care recipient if the carer gets sick.

The most common services carers have used to help the care recipient or themselves in their caring role are:

- physiotherapy
- psychology and counselling
- carer and family support groups
- Planned Activity Groups
- peak bodies
- health information and education
- cleaning
- aids and equipment
- Home and Community Care services
- respite.

Carers were asked to recommend resources for other carers. The most popular were:

- Carers Victoria
- Alzheimer's Australia Victoria
- local council services
- Commonwealth Respite & Carelink Centre
- Uniting Age Well.

Information carers have (or would have) found helpful from their GP included:

- referrals to specialists and health and community services
- GPs listening and being able to discuss issues with carers
- information about:
 - Day Centres
 - Planned Activity Groups
 - health conditions
 - respite
 - support groups.

The ways GPs have or could support carers include:

- writing referrals and paperwork to specialists and health and community services
- providing emotional support and listening
- being available to be contacted
- conducting home visits
- providing information and advice on relevant community services
- providing information about dealing with the care recipient’s condition
- acknowledging the carer’s role
- advocating for the carer’s needs.

The results show that there are numerous and varied challenges faced by carers, many of which can create a great deal of stress and pressure on the carer. Therefore, good support by GPs and local health and community services is invaluable.

Carers indicated they find referrals to specialists and health and community services, as well as provision of emotional support most helpful from their GP. Carers want GPs to be aware of and refer them to local services and help them navigate the service system, therefore it is of great value if GPs are aware of these types of services in their region.