

People with dementia gain from learning self-management skills

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People with early-stage dementia benefit when they are empowered to manage their own condition, a study led by researchers at the University of Exeter has found.

Research involving Bangor University and published in the journal *International Psychogeriatrics*, found that attending weekly 'self-management' group sessions which encouraged socialisation, discussion, problem solving and goal setting fostered independence and promoted social support amongst [people](#) with [dementia](#).

The groups, led by trained facilitators, were focused on providing people with a better understanding of their dementia and ways to cope with it. Participants were supported in their ability to manage their own symptoms, treatment and lifestyle changes with information and expert help. They were then encouraged to share ideas and strategies for dealing with their condition and were encouraged to record notes and reminders in a handbook.

"Developing dementia can be a scary and isolating experience. We developed a group programme to help people with dementia manage their condition and find ways of dealing with the changes in their lifestyle. We found early evidence that empowering people to manage their own symptoms and bringing them together helped them feel more confident about managing everyday life with dementia," said lead researcher Dr Catherine Quinn, Senior Research Fellow in The Centre for Research in Ageing and Cognitive Health (REACH).

"All this has helped to enhance their quality of life. The [group members](#) became friends and supported each other, and we found that they benefited from being able to learn from each other."

The pilot randomised controlled study, which was funded by Health and Care Research Wales, compared a group of people with early stage dementia who attended the 90-minute sessions for eight weeks to a group who received no intervention.

The impact of the sessions was assessed by interviews with people with dementia and their caregivers after three months and then again after six. Results showed that participants benefitted from the facilitator support, information and help provided, and became better able to help themselves and found support in other group members.

"We will need to carry out a larger scale trial to obtain more definitive evidence, but our initial results indicate that enabling people with dementia to take control and manage their condition can be beneficial," added Dr Quinn.

Provided by University of Exeter

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