

Executive Summary of the Report on –

Qualitative Experiences of Clients and Carers who have Accessed the Extended Aged Care in the Home (EACH) Packages in Rural NSW

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Background

EACH packages offer high level care for older frail Australians wishing to stay in their own homes instead going into permanent placement. The packages are relatively new, growing from 288 in 2002 to 2,999 in 2007.

The author's anecdotal observations as a clinical supervisor of EACH package for four years were positive. Overall, the author found that carer's became less stressed and the one being cared for generally improved in overall health.

This Rural Research Capacity Building Project allowed the author to delve more deeply into the qualitative experiences of clients and carers on EACH packages.

Research Goals

During the two year compilation of this report, no research literature had come to light on EACH packages. Furthermore, the literature has shown that few services world wide compare to that of the Australian EACH programme.

The goal of this report was to shed some light on the qualitative experiences of client's and carers who had an EACH package in place.

Research Methods

Approval was obtained from the NCAHS Ethics Committee prior to contacting any potential participants. The following are key points regarding methodology used in this study:-

- Households that agreed to take part in the study signed a written consent prior to any work being undertaken.
- All households invited to participate in the study agreed to take part.
- The participants were out of the geographical area in which the author worked and were not known to the author.
- Data was collected by semi structured, face to face interviews that were digitally recorded and later transcribed.
- Themes and recurrent patterns were identified from interview transcriptions and were highlighted if they offered a unique contribution during analysis.

Findings

The interviews encouraged the participants to relate their experiences of the initial reception of an EACH package, the complexity of care received and how the EACH package has impacted on their lives. The clients and carers offered a range of experiences, responses and emotions.

Recurrent themes from the four households included:

- Eased burden of care for the carer with the EACH package in place
- Acknowledgement of the many tasks that the support workers attend while in the home
- Support, friendship and care offered to the client by the support workers
- Supply of goods and equipment for the management of complex care in the home
- Availability of regular in house respite
- Regular nursing review and clinical nursing as required

To summarise the findings from the themes:-

- All participants expressed appreciation with having help with hygiene and domestic duties. By having the physical burden of care reduces then the levels of stress reduced.
- All participants acknowledged excellent, flexible care they received.
- The theme of support and friendship with support workers ran very strongly, to that of kinship. Two participants used the terms, “*kissing cousins*” and, “*treat me like a brother*” to describe the bond with support workers.
- The supply of equipment such as electric lifters, wheelchairs and incontinence pads was a financial ease for carers.
- Regular in house respite enabled the carers to maintain an active social life and to continue with the caring role.
- Regular nursing review allowed health issues to be managed efficiently and quickly.

Conclusions and Implications

Without question the EACH packages have made the difference in allowing the four case studies to remain in their own homes. The research findings were overwhelmingly positive with all participants expressing satisfaction with the EACH package in place. Also the positive anecdotal observations the author had made with extensive EACH experience as a nurse supervisor were validated.

None of the participants could find fault in the service provided or offer any suggestions for its improvement.

The following points need to be considered regarding EACH packages:-

- EACH packages offer highly flexible high needs care at the point of need.
- Unlike nursing homes, there is no outlay or up keep in bricks and mortar.
- Equipment, expensive at initial outlay, can be reused.
- Staffing is flexible and not reliant on 24 hour a day rostering

In conclusion, more research need to be done on the overall use of EACH packages, the anecdotal evidence points to a flexible model of care that can adjust to our ageing community. The use of EACH packages needs to continue and funding acquired roll out more Packages across the nation.