

Healthy Caring-supporting carers of people with dementia

Professor Debbie Tolson

Centre for Gerontological Practice

Glasgow Caledonian University



Positive Aspects of Caring

Key to

Sensitive

Approaches



Plan

- Carers in Scotland
- Health and caregiving
- Health consequences – dementia caregiving
- Evaluations of current interventions
- New thinking

Key Messages

- *Caring can adversely affect health*
- *Healthy caring requires proactive strategies & new thinking*

Carers in Scotland

- 29,000 people are carers
- Mean age 63 years
- More women (ratio 2:1)
- 800-5,000 people under 18yrs are carers

Carers provide 80% care in the community



An unknown path

Distress & Health

Mental Health

Depression, sleep disturbance, poor health habits (e.g. not eating well, smoking, alcohol misuse)

Physical Health

Elevated stress hormones, raised blood sugar, raised insulin, high blood pressure, reduced immune system

Prolonged Distress

Increases risk of depression, anxiety, heart problems, diabetes, infections (e.g. flu), age related changes, poor recovery from illness

**PROLONGED DISTRESS REDUCES CARER HEALTH
WE SHOULD NOT WAIT FOR A CRISIS TO INTERVENE**



COATS- Carers Outcome Agreement Assessment Tool

- Helping you care
- Making life better for you
- Making life better for your relative
- Getting good quality help

Hanson E, Nolan J, Sennewark E, Johnasson L, Nolan M (2006)
COAT: The Carers Outcome Assessment Tool. GRiP Report.
University College of Boras, Sweden. University of Sheffield, UK.



Family carers
as partners

Rights based
policy

Scottish Executive response to
Care 21 Report:
The Future of Unpaid Care in Scotland

Conclusion

- Caring has health consequences
- Carers have a right to health
- Moral & economic imperative to promote healthy caring
- Requires a strategic response and new ways of thinking

