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## Care giver distress in dementia in rural Victoria

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**Aim:** The aim of this study was to explore the levels of stress, anxiety and depression of informal carers caring for someone with dementia in a rural setting. The study also sought to determine carer's primary source of stress and their use of dementia specific services.

**Methods:** Carers of people with dementia were recruited to complete a survey that incorporated the Depression, Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS) to measure carer emotional well-being. The survey also included the Neuropsychiatric Inventory Questionnaire (NPI-Q), which assesses the presence and severity of behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD) of care recipients and their effect on the carer. They were also asked through an open ended question what they found most stressful in their caring role and what services they utilised.

**Results:** A total of 39 carers completed surveys. Almost half of the respondents reported levels of stress and depression in the moderate to severe range as measured on the DASS. BPSD exhibited by care recipients, such as agitation, anxiety, aggression and nocturnal disturbance, showed a relationship to the level of stress reported by the carer as measured with the NPI-Q. Despite 84.6% reporting use of the Aged Care Assessment Service and 61.5% reporting provision of printed information on the services available, less than half of the carers utilised commonly available support services. Only 46.2% received financial compensation for their carer role. The predominant source of stress reported was the unremitting burden experienced when caring for someone with dementia.

### Biography

Kaye Ervin has been a registered nurse for over thirty years, practicing predominantly in rural Victoria. Her passion is aged care and the focus of her research interests for the past 6 years. She is a member of the rural health department, the University of Melbourne. She has published 20 papers in international peer reviewed journals and regularly presents her research at National and International forums.

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