

Abstract Details

Title: **Improving relationship quality between persons with dementia and their informal caregivers with a psycho-educative intervention**

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Introduction: Current relationship quality between the person with dementia and their informal caregivers is an important determinant of both persons' well-being and of the caregivers' ability to continue caregiving. Dementia caregiving dyads are likely to experience negative changes in their relationship due to dementia, such as declines in reciprocity, affection, communication or opportunities for shared activities. As reciprocity is difficult to maintain due to the increasing needs of the person with dementia, caregivers need new skills to maintain it and sustain the relationship with their loved one with dementia.

Method: Qualitative semi-structured interviews with 13 informal caregivers were performed before, during and after their participation in a psycho-educative intervention, to collect data on changes regarding the relationship to the person with dementia and intervention components facilitating or preventing these changes.

Results: Having specific knowledge about the disease and its consequences on the abilities of the affected person helps caregivers better understand the behavior of the person with dementia as well as better adapt their expectations and their own behavior to the needs of this person. Adapted interactions allow persons with dementia to respond positively, for example by showing less distress and giving compliments. Other strategies such as sharing experiences with people in similar situations, reframing unhelpful thoughts and distinguishing between changeable and unchangeable aspects of the situation help informal caregivers to "let go" or to act when adapted. Caregivers who do this perceive more calmness which allow them to enjoy the time shared with the person with dementia and to maintain reciprocity.

Conclusion: Helping informal caregivers maintain reciprocity and positivity in their relationship with their loved one living with dementia is essential for both persons' well-being, and we have first evidence that it can be achieved with a psycho-educative intervention.

