Younger Onset Dementia: The benefits of Early Intervention

Monica Cations

Early Intervention Coordinator
Alzheimer’s Australia SA
Younger Onset Dementia

Diagnosed before the age of 65 (or 50 if Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander).

Characterised by progressive changes in:

- Thinking
- Memory
- Language
- Personality
Benefits of Early Intervention

- Increased emotional and psychological wellbeing
- Reduced stress
- Future legal and financial planning
- Informed decision making regarding fitness to drive
- Motivation to use remaining capabilities
- Maintenance of independence for longer
SERVICE AND SUPPORT REQUIREMENTS
OF PEOPLE WITH YOUNGER ONSET
DEMENTIA AND THEIR FAMILIES
FINAL REPORT, AUGUST, 2012

FOR AGEING, DISABILITY AND HOME CARE
DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES, NSW
What makes younger people different?

- Lengthy diagnosis
- Rarer dementia types
- Loss of plans
- Still employed or recently retired
- Young or adolescent children
- Fit and mobile
Living with Memory Loss Workshop: Younger Onset Dementia

- Two hour workshop
- After hours
- Education
- Strategies
- Socialising
Positive feedback

“Very well presented at a level I could easily understand – thank you.”

“The minute I walked in the room, I felt that I belonged and was accepted.”

“Good being in a reasonably small group that were happy to discuss their own experiences and problems.”
What can be improved?

“Perhaps two shorter sessions – lots of information covered.”

“How do carers cope with someone with dementia!!?”

“It would be good to allow additional time for participants to socialise.”
Major themes

• Lengthy, confusing diagnosis process
• Loss and grief – “why me?”
• Lack of specific support for family carers
• Relationship changes
• Changes to employment; financial pressure

...as well as all of the other challenges that come with dementia!
What can you do?

• Be open to the conversation - What are your barriers? Why CAN’T you?
• Create a safe space
• Provide education
• Celebrate strengths
• Be flexible
• Consider the whole family unit
• Get support for yourself
Take home message

“Don’t be afraid—it’s just your office.”
Monica Cations
Alzheimer’s Australia SA

monica.cations@alzheimers.org.au

National Dementia Helpline:

1800 100 500