Staying at home and dementia care

This leaflet explains some of the issues for BAME family carers of a relative living with dementia during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It gives suggestions on how agencies might be able to offer support.

Meri Yaadain CiC
Supporting Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) people living with or caring for someone with dementia
What might be the impact of COVID-19 on BAME people living with or caring for a relative with dementia

Caring for people with middle to later stages of dementia can be really difficult for all carers at the best of times. However, the added restriction on movement outside the house may add anxiety and stress to the person with dementia and therefore also the carer. BAME communities may have language, faith and cultural support restricted, causing additional voids in support.

People in the BAME communities may well be managing complex health needs in addition to dementia. Access to the right advice and support may be difficult. Managing dementia care during COVID-19 isolation will be tricky, especially if:

- you are a person with dementia living alone and unable to understand risks
- no friends or family to check on you (carer or person with dementia)
- do not understand the information/advice coming from the NHS and the government to stay at home
- worried about getting access to the GP or getting your medicines on time
- worried about getting their shopping in, without having to queue outside at the supermarket
- worried that the daily routine will be disrupted
- twenty second hand-washing at regular intervals may become difficult for the carer to implement
- wider family and friend networks may not understand why they cannot come to visit their relative living with dementia
- closure of faith institutions may remove faith/spiritual support
- closure of community/day centres will remove community support
- lack of clear instruction of a 'one point of call', may put carer and person with dementia at risk
So what can carers do to look after themselves and the relative with dementia?

Keeping up to date with advice coming from the Government or the NHS will help carers understand what is being suggested and why. Not all information can be given in one leaflet, but carers can be guided to local, regional or national organisations.

INFORMATION & SUPPORT
Lots of information is being given and the key message is to stay at home, only go out to do essential food shopping, or for one exercise session per day locally. Details of the main national support organisations can be found on the back of this leaflet.

DEALING WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY
BAME communities often fear stigma from family and the wider community. Carers can be reminded that this is about them and the person they are caring for. However, the use smart technology to keep regular contact, for example via video calling, can help keep families informed. They may then feel involved and suggest ideas on how to cope at home.

HELPING THE PERSON WITH DEMENTIA
They may be confused, get angry, want to go out. Carers can make use of the garden, or go for a walk locally. Carers could encourage the cared for person to wash their hands with warm water and soap at the same time as themselves. For social activities, carers could think about help in the kitchen, perhaps cooking or baking. Looking through old pictures, watching a film, look at family videos, play simple games could be enjoyable reminiscence sessions. If faith was important, religious recordings could be played to encourage calmness. If they liked music, play their favourite tunes. They could make use of the different rooms in the house as different environments for them.

LOOKING AFTER THEMSELVES
It is important that carers learn to look after themselves through this difficult and testing time. Speaking to friends and family through phone/video calls will give some normality. Accepting that dementia care is sometimes difficult and tiring is a good start to realise that we are all human. This will then remind carers that it is ok to ask for help.
REMEMBER

Carers need to look after themselves as well as trying to minimise the risks for the person they are caring for. Advise carers to:

1. Stay home and stay safe
2. Wash hands regularly with soap and warm water, encouraging the person with dementia to do so too - perhaps at the same time
3. Make a timetable regarding activities to be undertaken
4. Speak to their faith leader by phone, or perhaps play faith recitation/music recordings for spiritual calmness
5. Encourage regular contact with friends and family via video calling
6. Speak to their local Social Services for any help, advice and support
7. Engage in activities at home, to keep the person with dementia engaged through games, tv, books, films, arts and crafts or go for a walk staying local and abiding by Government advice regarding social distancing.

Sometimes we can act as gatekeepers or become biased / prejudiced in our actions perhaps without even knowing. Being aware of equality and equity will help agencies to support BAME carers. Local organisations can help and advise, but national organisations may also be able to offer guidance. Information is also available on their websites. BAME organisations can also discuss cultural or faith issues which may impact on dementia care.

Alzheimer’s Society: 0333 150 3456

Dementia UK: 0800 888 6678
https://www.dementiauk.org


Gov.UK:
https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus

NHS:
https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19

Meri Yaadain CiC, Girlington Centre
Girlington Road BRADFORD BD8 9NN

www.meriyaadain.co.uk

info@meriyaadain.co.uk

@MeriYaadainCiC