The impacts of COVID-19 on unpaid carers of adults with long-term care needs and measures to address these impacts: a rapid review of the available evidence

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Methods

- **Aim:** to map the available evidence on the impact of COVID-19 on unpaid carers (aged 18+) of adults with LTC needs

- **Sources:**
  - Scientific databases (CINAHL, Medline, Socindex and Embase for narrative for selecting these databases)
  - Google search engine for grey literature
  - LTCcovid.org

- **Search terms:** (Family OR Informal OR unpaid) AND (carer OR caregiver) AND (COVID-19 OR coronavirus OR 2019-ncov) for CINAHL, Medline and SocIndex, (Family OR Informal OR unpaid) AND (carer OR caregiver) AND (COVID-19) for Embases and caregiver covid, informal carer covid, carer AND covid, unpaid AND COVID for medRxiv

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<th>Mixed Methods</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Voluntary</th>
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Results
Themes identified

1. Changes in care responsibilities
   • More new carers (mostly women, younger & childcare responsibility)
   • Most carers increased care commitment
   • Some provide less care (distancing guidelines/ travel restrictions)

2. Concern around COVID-19
   • Concerns about catching COVID-19
   • What happens if carer unable to care
   • (early pandemic) difficulty accessing resources
   • Government guidelines that can be adhered to
   • How to maintain the care situation during winter
   • Carers of people with dementia: faster decline of cognitive abilities
Themes identified

3. Changes in availability of formal and informal support
   • Unavailability of home care
   • Concerns what will happen in future
   • Many people continue to receive unpaid support, for others practical support stopped (government guidelines, fear of infection)
   • Reduced availability and delay in access to medical care

4. Financial implications
   • Reduced community service – challenges for working carers
   • Financial implications observed in system where there is less social protection
5. Impact on carer health and wellbeing
   • Some reported positive experiences
   • Increased burden, stress and other stress related symptoms
   • Social isolation & loneliness
   • Worsened mental health, mental well-being and physical health

6. Carers adaptability
   • Drawing strength from informal support network
   • Emphasising making time for themselves
   • Prioritising self-care
Themes identified

7. Experience of carers supporting people living in residential care settings

• Feelings of stress, anger, guilt over inability to visit
• Reliant on staff for updates and to facilitate contact
• Difficulty assessing health and well-being of their relative
• Difficulty assessing quality of care relatives receive
• Concern about treatment if relatives not present to monitor
• Long-term implications of sustained isolations
Measures to address the impact on carers and evidence on their impact

1. **Technology**
   - To maintain social contacts
   - For peer support
   - Contact with social services and care providers
   - Delivery of medical care
   - Ordering supplies

2. **Financial assistance & support for working carers**
   - Paid leave/ furlough/ stimulus checks
   - Flexibility in using funds that are usually allocated for community-care
Thank you

Preprint of the paper available at: