
POSTER ABSTRACT

Strengthening Support for Caregivers in Singapore: Understanding their experiences and needs

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Background: As Singapore's population ages, caregivers play an increasingly vital role in supporting seniors with complex care needs. The Agency for Integrated Care (AIC), Singapore's national care coordination agency, has conducted annual caregiver surveys since 2022 to inform support strategies. This study presents findings from the 2024 survey, focusing on caregiver profiles and experiences.

Methods: Caregivers aged 21 and above who provided physical, socio-emotional, practical, and/or financial support to individuals with dementia, mental health conditions, stroke, cancer, other serious illnesses, or frailty were surveyed. Respondents were recruited via community care service providers and a survey vendor.

Data collected included demographics, caregiving context, awareness and use of support services, satisfaction levels, and responses to the locally validated 21-item modified Caregiver Reaction Assessment (m-CRA). The m-CRA measures four domains: (1) disturbed schedule and poor health, (2) lack of finances, (3) lack of family support, and (4) caregiver esteem. Scores range from 1 to 5, with higher scores in the first three domains indicating greater burden. Independent-sample t-tests were used to compare m-CRA scores across groups.

Results: A total of 849 caregivers participated, with 40% recruited through service providers. Approximately 70% were women aged 50 years and above, and 54% had been providing care for at least four years. The mean m-CRA scores in the domains of "lack of finances" and "lack of family support" were significantly higher among caregivers who actively searched for information compared to those who did not ($p < .05$). Key information sources included healthcare professionals, the internet, and AIC. Approximately 41% of caregivers were aware of available support services.

Among those who used them, 66% expressed satisfaction. The most desired service, cited by 38% of respondents, was support for care and future planning for both caregivers and care recipients. About half of caregivers who registered for training delegated attendance to co-caregivers. Sole caregivers - those without co-caregivers - reported significantly higher mean m-CRA scores in the

“lack of finances” and “lack of family support” domains compared to those with co-caregivers ($p < 0.05$).

Implications: The survey findings highlight the need for targeted outreach and improved communication to raise awareness and accessibility of caregiver support services. The results suggest that caregivers facing greater challenges, such as financial strain and lack of family support, were more likely to seek help such as actively searching for information, underscoring the importance of making resources more visible and easier to navigate.

To enhance access, digital platforms and healthcare touchpoints should be leveraged to guide caregivers more effectively. The strong demand for future care planning support reflects caregivers’ concerns about long-term sustainability. Integrating caregiver-focused services, such as self-care education, emotional support, and training on managing challenging behaviours, into care recipient programmes can better address these needs.

In response, AIC will refine its caregiver support strategies through community-based initiatives and a dyadic care approach that supports both caregivers and care recipients. Continued evidence-informed efforts and consolidated survey analyses will guide the development of multi-pronged strategies to support ageing-in-place in Singapore’s rapidly ageing society.