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## Effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of an in-home respite care program in supporting informal caregivers of people with dementia: Design of a comparative study

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**Background:** Dementia is a major public health problem with serious physical and emotional consequences for patients and their informal caregivers. Although informal caregiving can be very satisfying, it is also a highly demanding task often leading to substantial burden and potentially causing physical and mental problems when caregiving demands exceed resources. To prevent caregivers from getting overburdened, it is important to support them. Preliminary evidence suggests that community-based respite services can actually be important to alleviate caregiver burden.

**Methods:** A quasi-experimental study was designed to assess (cost)-effectiveness of an innovative in-home respite care program. The primary outcome is caregiver burden. Secondary outcomes are: quality of life of caregivers, frequency of behavioral problems of persons with dementia and caregivers' reactions to them, intention to institutionalize the care-recipient, time to nursing home placement, resource use, and willingness to pay. When the trial demonstrates a difference in outcomes, cost-effectiveness analyses will be conducted in a separate economic evaluation plan. Finally, the model based cost-effectiveness analyses will allow to extrapolate effects over a longer time horizon than the duration of the trial.

**Discussion:** To date no well powered studies measured (cost)-effectiveness of an in-home respite care program. This trial will help in bridging this information gap. Conclusions based on this trial can help clinicians, patient groups and policy-makers in elaborating future directions of dementia care.

### Biography

Sophie Vandepitte is currently working on her PhD at the University of Ghent, faculty of medicine and health sciences (Belgium) after graduating as Master of Science in Health Education and Health Promotion (Magna cum laude). Her PhD research is focused on investigating the potential impact of support for informal caregivers of persons with dementia in terms of effectiveness and cost-effectiveness. During her PhD she has already published three papers in reputed journals and serves currently as an associate editor of the Journal of Alzheimer Disease.

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