

**B145**

**Carer impact on self-management by people with advanced cancer living with changing eating habits**

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**Background**

Internationally there is interest in supporting self-management, as a way of enhancing the quality of life of people living with illness and reducing the economic cost of care. This is the first study to examine the impact of carers on self-management behaviour by cancer patients.

**Method**

The research was an in-depth mixed methods study of weight loss and eating difficulties in people with advanced cancer. The study participants included 32 patient-carer pairs receiving palliative home care in the South of England in either 2003 or 2005. Semi-structured interviews were analysed using both content and thematic approaches, which revealed self-management of changing eating habits [Hopkinson J.B. (In press) Self-management: An exploration of how people with advanced cancer help themselves live with weight loss and change in eating habits. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*]. This paper reports an interpretation of the way carers were found to impact on patient self-management.

**Findings**

All carers wanted to help patients and many were troubled by uncertainty about the adequacy of their caregiving. However, patients gave examples both of carer behaviours that promoted self-management and conversely of those that were experienced as disabling.

This paper critiques the patient focus of most intervention that aims to support self-management. Drawing on the example of people with advanced cancer managing eating difficulties, it argues that self-management might best be facilitated using a family focused approach to supportive cancer care.

**Conclusions**

Further work is needed to establish the ways in which carers can be helped to support patient self-management.