The road less travelled: communication preferences of family members caring for Alzheimer’s sufferers.

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All authors give permission for their names and contact details to be included, along with their contributions to the conference, in the paper and the on-line Conference Proceedings.

The interactional theory of communication argues that meaning is created by the participants involved and that each communication is potentially different. For communication to be truly effective it needs to be conveyed to the receiver at the relevant time, with the right amount of detail and in an appropriate form or channel. When that communication contains information regarding medical matters and takes place across different providers, it becomes increasingly complex.

At present there is a growing awareness of the incidence of Alzheimer’s disease and the implications of this for both families and New Zealand at large. Agencies are lobbying the Government for more money and for a strategy to deal with the potential numbers of sufferers.

This presentation describes the first stage of research into the communication between family members caring for people with Alzheimer’s disease and the support
services available to assist them. It focuses on the communication preferences of the
carers when accessing information and emotional support.

The research method involved in-depth interviews with people who were caring for or
had cared for someone with Alzheimer’s.

The main findings are that interviewees obtained most of their information from
informal personal networks or support groups. They also felt that it was preferable to
have one ‘go to’ person within the support services who could give information, if and
when the carer needed or wanted it.