

Implementing iSupport in Dementia Care

A Playbook for Carers and Professionals



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Implementing iSupport in Dementia Care:

A playbook for carers and professionals

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Most people living with dementia are supported at home by family members, a situation that is particularly common within culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. While family carers play a critical role in supporting the wellbeing of people with dementia, they often receive far less training and support than health professionals. As a result, caregiving can be stressful, demanding, and at times overwhelming.

This playbook has been developed for informal carers (family members, friends, and neighbours) and for professionals and organisations involved in dementia care. It introduces an evidence-based iSupport model designed to address gaps in carer training and support. The model and its accompanying resources were co-designed with stakeholders, rigorously tested for effectiveness, and trialled for integration into routine care services. This work was undertaken as part of a five-year project funded by the MRFF Dementia, Ageing and Aged Care Mission and the DCRC World Class Research Grants.

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Canberra Health Services



Health
Southern Adelaide
Local Health Network



Resthaven
Incorporated





Section 1: Introduction

This playbook is written for informal carers (family members, friends and neighbours) of people living with dementia, professionals and organisations providing dementia care services. It introduces an evidence-based iSupport model for carers we co-designed with stakeholders [1, 2]; tested for its effectiveness [3, 4]; and trialled for embedding it in routine care services to meet organisations' quality improvement needs in a 5-year project.

The instructions to implement the iSupport model focus on the three components of the model:

01

The iSupport program as a dementia education program for carers

02

Carer peer support in the iSupport program

03

Individualised support for carers offered in the iSupport program

Carers and professionals can use this playbook to access and utilise the iSupport program in multiple languages. Organisations providing care services to people with dementia and/or their carers can use this playbook to plan their quality improvement activities to embed and sustain the iSupport model in whole or in part. The playbook details the iSupport website [5], resources and tools to support the implementation of the iSupport model in whole or in part.



The World Health Organization iSupport for Dementia Program

Most people living with dementia are cared for at home by their family members. This is especially common in culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. While family carers play a vital role, they often receive much less training and support than health professionals, which can make caring stressful and overwhelming.

To help address this gap, the World Health Organization (WHO) developed the iSupport for Dementia program [6]. The program is a free, self-guided resource available online or as a printable manual, designed to support informal carers of people living with dementia. The program provides practical advice and skills to help carers:



The Flinders University-led iSupport research group has worked closely with carers, community members, and service providers to adapt the WHO iSupport program for use in Australia. We will introduce the Australian iSupport program in Section 2.

The Australian iSupport Model and Research Evidence

iSupport is a multicomponent intervention, meaning it includes multiple types of intervention within the one support package. Research evidence shows that multicomponent interventions for carers of people with dementia can better achieve person-centred and better outcomes for carers and their care recipients than single component interventions [7, 8].

Our extensive consultations with stakeholders support that carers expect one-stop shop support in the iSupport program [9-11]. Therefore, we co-designed the iSupport Model with stakeholders which includes three intervention components as shown in Figure 1.

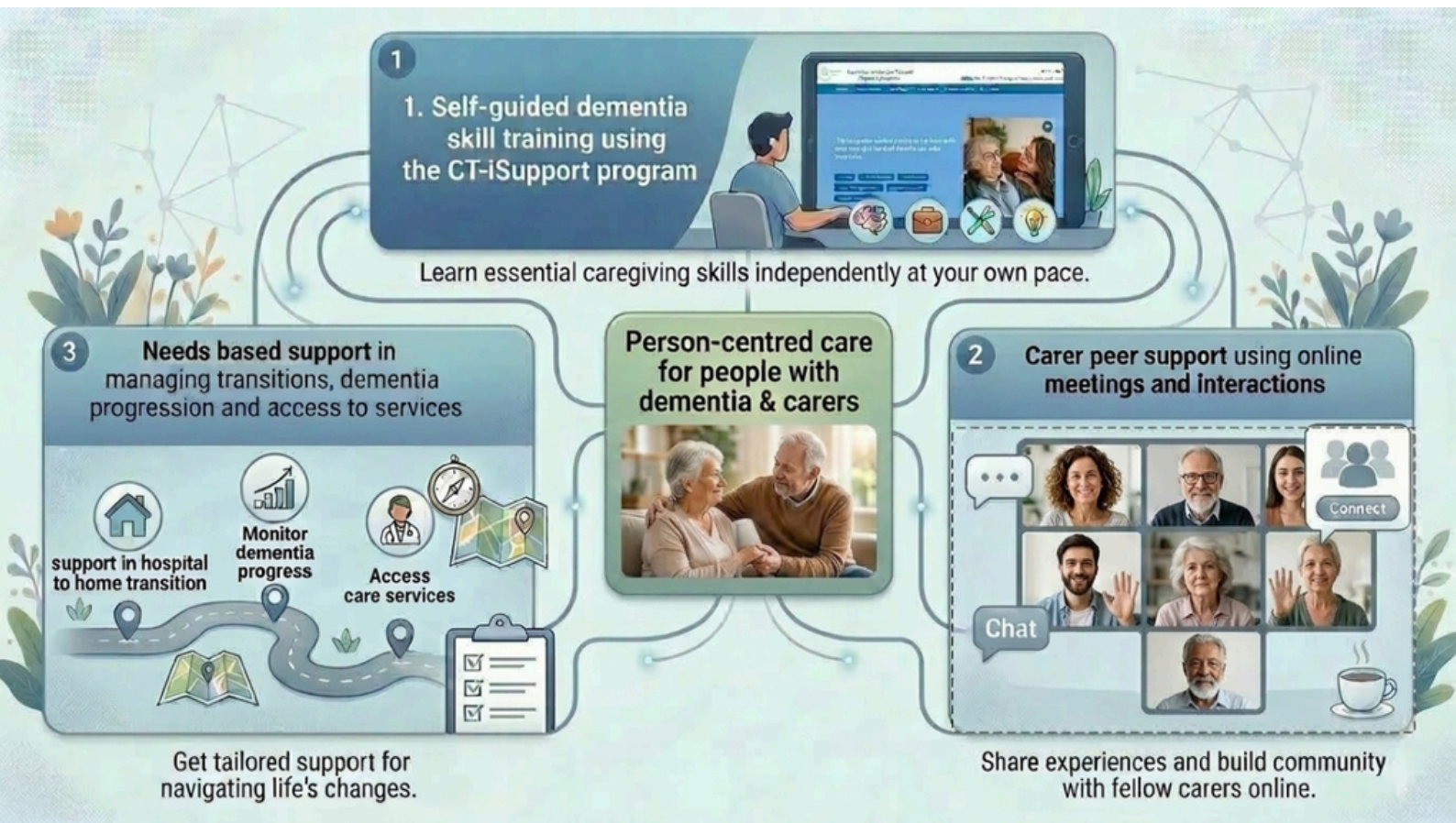


Figure 1 The iSupport Model

We have tested the iSupport Model in a large randomised controlled trial in partnership with two tertiary hospitals and two large-sized aged care organisations [3]. The results showed that compared with usual care, carers who participated in the iSupport Model:

<p>1. Carers reported better mental health-related quality of life;</p> 	<p>2. Carers felt more confident in their caregiving role;</p> 	<p>3. Carers experienced lower levels of emotional stress;</p> 
<p>4. Carers achieved improved Quality-Adjusted Life Years (QALYs);</p> 	<p>5. The intervention saved money for the health system</p> 	<p>6. Carers contributed to reduced hospital admissions for people living with dementia.</p> 

Our results align with a large international trial using the iSupport Model [12]. The iSupport model has been adapted as a “Culturally-tailored iSupport Model” (CT-iSupport) in CALD communities in Australia. A pilot implementation study found similar positive results for carers [13].

In recognition of individual needs and preferences, carers can choose to participate in the model in whole or in part. Similarly, based on organisations’ needs to address gaps in their care services, they can implement the model in whole or in part.

The programs enable carers to perform self-care and care for their loved ones with dementia.

Register →

Login →

Continue your iSupport course →

Instructions to users (PDF) →

Watch the instruction video →



Section 2: The Australian iSupport Program

How can I access the Australian iSupport program?

The Australian iSupport program is available in eight languages: English, Greek, Indonesian Bahasa, Italian, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Spanish, and Vietnamese [5].

You can access the program online at:
<https://www.isupportaustralia.com.au>

Step-by-step written and video instructions are provided to access the web-based iSupport program.

You can download the iSupport E-book in a language of your choice via the iSupport website or via the links listed in Appendix 1, or QR codes shown in Appendices 2. You can save the iSupport E-book to your device and study the program. You can also print out the E-book if you prefer to use a hardcopy iSupport manual to study



What is included in the iSupport program?

The Australian iSupport program includes six modules:

- Introduction to dementia
- Being a carer
- Caring for yourself
- Providing everyday care
- Dealing with changed behaviour
- My engagement in consumer-directed care

The model 6 is co-developed with stakeholders in Australia to meet their expectations to access and utilise dementia and aged care services [9]. The iSupport program is made up of short learning units, each taking about 10–15 minutes to complete. Carers can work through the program at their own pace.



What else do I need to know about the iSupport program?

The iSupport program addresses the full dementia journey, with content relevant to the early, moderate, and late stages of dementia. Carers can use the **“Outline of the iSupport for dementia program”** shown in the Appendix 3 to choose units to their study plan that best match their individual needs and learning goals, allowing for a flexible and personalised learning experience.

iSupport is grounded in real-life caregiving situations, using everyday examples to help carers understand good care practices, anticipate common challenges, and develop practical problem-solving skills. The program also introduces strategies such as relaxation techniques, help-seeking behaviours, and positive reframing of caregiving experiences, supporting carers to build sustainable self-care habits.

Using an experiential learning approach, iSupport empowers carers to actively apply new knowledge, skills, and attitudes in their daily caregiving roles, fostering confidence, resilience, and effective care delivery.



Comments from carers on the iSupport program

"After having gone through the program, I can tell you come 100% that it has helped me to settle into becoming a carer...it's very comprehensive. It was like the gift that kept on giving".

"The iSupport course was very good because I really didn't know anything about dementia at all... There was a lot of good tips there about how to talk to someone with dementia, how to look after yourself...".



"I started with Module 3 'Caring for me' in my learning plan to study...I found mindful breathing worked very well for me. I can do when I have a few quiet minutes".

"I look back and think the program has helped me make positive changes in my wife's daily life."

"I was supposed to do the course on the computer, but I have a lot of trouble. I just can't read as well on the screen as I can on paper. So she [the facilitator] sent me the physical copy and I've been going through that as well".



Section 3. Carer peer support

The iSupport program provides a valuable platform for engaging carers in meaningful peer support. In the iSupport and CT-iSupport models, health or aged care organisations nominate health and social care professionals to undertake facilitator training. These trained facilitators lead structured peer support groups for carers.

How does a facilitator lead a carer peer support group?

The facilitator allocates carers to small groups of six to eight participants. They meet monthly via online platforms such as Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp, or other suitable digital communication tools.

A suggested meeting agenda is provided in Appendix 4 to support consistent, purposeful, and supportive group sessions.

Between meetings, facilitators encourage carers within the same group to stay connected through text messaging or online chat. This ongoing communication helps strengthen needs-based peer support, fosters shared learning, and reinforces carers' sense of connection, mutual understanding, and ongoing support.

Comments from carers on carer peer support

“Everyone in the group is so willing to listen to others. I feel good that I am not isolated, and I have a group to talk to if I need”.

“Having a chat with people who understand my situation and sometimes having a little laugh in meetings would really reduce the stress...and also realise that I'm not alone”.



“You’ve got the emotional side, and you’ve got the reality side of it. So, it’s a very lonely world. And I think you know joining the iSupport and you’ve got others, people on that chat group was really really great”.

“I think my favourite part of the program is a regular meeting where everyone exchanges information and intelligence. It has more mental support for me than I do”.



Section 4. Individualised support for carers

The facilitator provides individualised, needs-based support to carers participating in the iSupport program. The facilitator encourages carers to make contact whenever support is needed, using online meetings, phone calls, or text messaging.

How does the facilitator provide support to carers?

The facilitator provide individualised support mainly includes, but is not limited to:



Each support contact typically lasts 15–30 minutes. Facilitators provide follow-up support as required and continue contact until the carer's needs have been appropriately addressed. Appendix 5 provides a structured tool to guide facilitators in working with carers to identify, plan, and meet their individual support needs.

Comments from carers on carer peer support

"She [a facilitator] even rang me at times to see how I was getting on..."

"The biggest thing was emotional support from Julie [a facilitator]...she was really caring."



"@Facilitator thank you so, so, so much for the kindness and gentle wisdom. I have taken your words very much to heart and will act on them...I will regain my balance and try again with XX [the care recipient with changed behaviours]".

“One of the things that I did appreciate was Karen [the facilitator] prompts over the time...So this prompt I mentioned is coming in through text messages from Karen.”



Section 5: Implementing The iSupport Model in your organisations

How can organisations embed the iSupport model in routine care services?

Two tertiary hospitals and two aged care organisations in the “Partnership in iSupport program” used a quality improvement (QI) project as a strategy to embed the iSupport model in whole or in part in their routine care services. The leader of each organisation led stakeholders’ consultations in their organisation to identify problems in dementia care, plan a 6-month quality improvement project, implement-observe the project, and evaluate the outcomes. The examples of their QI projects are outlined in Table 1.1 and 1.2:

Table 1.1 Examples of using QI project to embed iSupport model in Hospital

Problems identified	Embedding the iSupport model in whole or part
Hospitals: Lack post-diagnostic support for carers in outpatient clinics.	Nominate and train a master facilitator; master facilitator train staff to be iSupporter or champions to disseminate iSupport information to carers, refer them to the master facilitator for up to 6-week follow-up when appropriate.
Hospitals: Lack of support for carers in the discharge plan in geriatric wards & dementia wards.	Support the master facilitator to train staff to engage carers in self-assessment of support needs; incorporate the needs into discharge plan; introduce the iSupport program to carers; a 6-week post-discharge follow-up by the master facilitator.
Hospitals: Lack of tailored information about how to manage changed behaviours for carers.	Design iSupport toolkit flyers to target commonly identified changed behaviours, train staff to use the iSupport toolkit flyers to enhance support for carers.

**Table 1.2 Examples of using QI project
to embed iSupport model in Aged Care Organisations**

Problems identified	Embedding the iSupport model in whole or part
Community aged care 1: need to provide information about support for carers in the Support at Home admission pack.	Design and incorporate the iSupport program flyer, train care coordinators using existing staff meetings to introduce the information to carers and follow-up support when need.
Community aged care 1: need information about support for dementia carers via the organisation website.	Embed the iSupport program information to the organisation website to raise the awareness of the program.
Community aged care 2: need to easy access dementia education program for carers.	Build the iSupport program and make it easily accessible for carers via the organisation's website.
Community aged care 2: demand for dementia education for residents in retirement villages.	Design and deliver a 6-week online facilitator-led iSupport program in a retirement village.
Community aged care 1 and 2	Offer the whole iSupport model to carers and provide follow up for 6 months.

'iSupport for Dementia' Program

Partnership in iSupport



Organisations well placed to implement the iSupport model

Dementia and aged care organisations, health care organisations, Carer Gateway service providers, and Primary Health Networks (PHNs) are well placed to implement the iSupport model, either in full or in part. These organisations are well positioned to integrate iSupport into existing dementia care and carer support services.

The Flinders University-led iSupport research group can provide technical assistance and implementation support to organisations seeking to enhance their dementia care services through adoption of the iSupport model, whether fully or partially.

By working together, the iSupport model will reach more and support more carers of people with dementia who need help.

For inquiries on embedding the iSupport model in whole or in part, please contact the project team: isupport@flinders.edu.au.

Carers' comments on iSupport facilitator-led quality improvement projects

"I have found it [the iSupport manual] was very useful in a number of ways...it's a good reference point. I often go back and have a look at the book to see, you know how I should handle a search in certain situation... And the other thing is that it's relieved more stress levels. I now have a different perspective on what's happening and how I need to react to various situations".

"If you've got an issue, she [the master facilitator] will try and floss it around and find something to help you. Like recently I'm just a bit concerned about some daycare and I would have had to foster get that on my own. She was able to give me links to various people that might, you know, organisations might be able to do that".



"But I guess the good thing was whatever came up in the conversation, Joe was able to follow up with resources afterwards".



"But I guess the good thing was whatever came up in the conversation, Joe was able to follow up with resources afterwards".

"You know just to have a single point of contact, like for all of these resources, like there's resources everywhere. But like, you don't know what you don't know. So, you can't necessarily know where to look for stuff. And Joe was just able to funnel it all in".

"I mean there's heaps of resources that Karen [a facilitator] was sending out to us and the thing that I used that's we had the biggest impact was the emergency care plan. Supporting people to understand her and what she needs and what who she was as a person before".

Staff's comments on iSupport facilitator-led quality improvement projects

"You know when their loved ones are diagnosed, they're really just diagnosed and then not given any support, not given any direction to services or how the disease progresses or how to manage certain situations. So, I mean that's where iSupport is so great. We are still trying to spread the word about iSupport so that people can access it".

"Yes, I think it would be great and we should start with the geriatrician as soon as they do referrals and as soon as they make a diagnosis. They should go a straight way to iSupport, encourage the people to start to use iSupport. It would be good idea to start to do some education and you know and prevention, and get bit some preventative strategies to prevent this kind of behaviour".

"Carers required assistance with applying for her mother's home-care support package. An email with detailed instructions from a social worker was sent to her, and her mother subsequently received approval for the home-care support."

"I did participate and I think it helped build my own knowledge and understanding of the iSupport programme, which then in turn supports me to support the carers.

"I find it's actually rewarding like you actually get to know the patient more and know how to support them and their whole family".

"But often we had quite a lot of husband and wives. We definitely had a mass, a major skew across the project to spouse and therefore over the age of 80...So, the programme is more beneficial for those old carers".

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Partner organisations in the projects

- Flinders University (lead organisation),
- Southern Adelaide Local Health Network (SALHN),
- Canberra Health Services (CHS),
- Resthaven SA,
- Bolton Clarke,
- UniSA.

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of South Australia

Health
Southern Adelaide
Local Health Network



Resthaven
Incorporated



**Bolton
Clarke**

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Links for multiple language versions of iSupport program in Australia

English

https://researchnow.flinders.edu.au/files/194212237/Xiao_iSupport_P2025.pdf

Chinese (Simplified) (简体中文)

https://researchnow.flinders.edu.au/files/194213331/Xiao_Support_P2025_Simp_Chinese.pdf

Chinese (Traditional) (繁體中文)

https://researchnow.flinders.edu.au/files/194214157/Xiao_iSupport_P2025_Trad_Chinese.pdf

Greek (Ελληνικά)

https://researchnow.flinders.edu.au/files/194215157/Xiao_iSupport_P2025_Greek.pdf

Italian (Italiano)

https://researchnow.flinders.edu.au/files/195307492/Xiao_iSupport_P2025Italian.pdf

Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia)

https://researchnow.flinders.edu.au/files/194214471/Xiao_iSupport_P2025_Bahasa.pdf

Spanish (Español)

https://researchnow.flinders.edu.au/files/194210358/Xiao_iSupport_P2025_

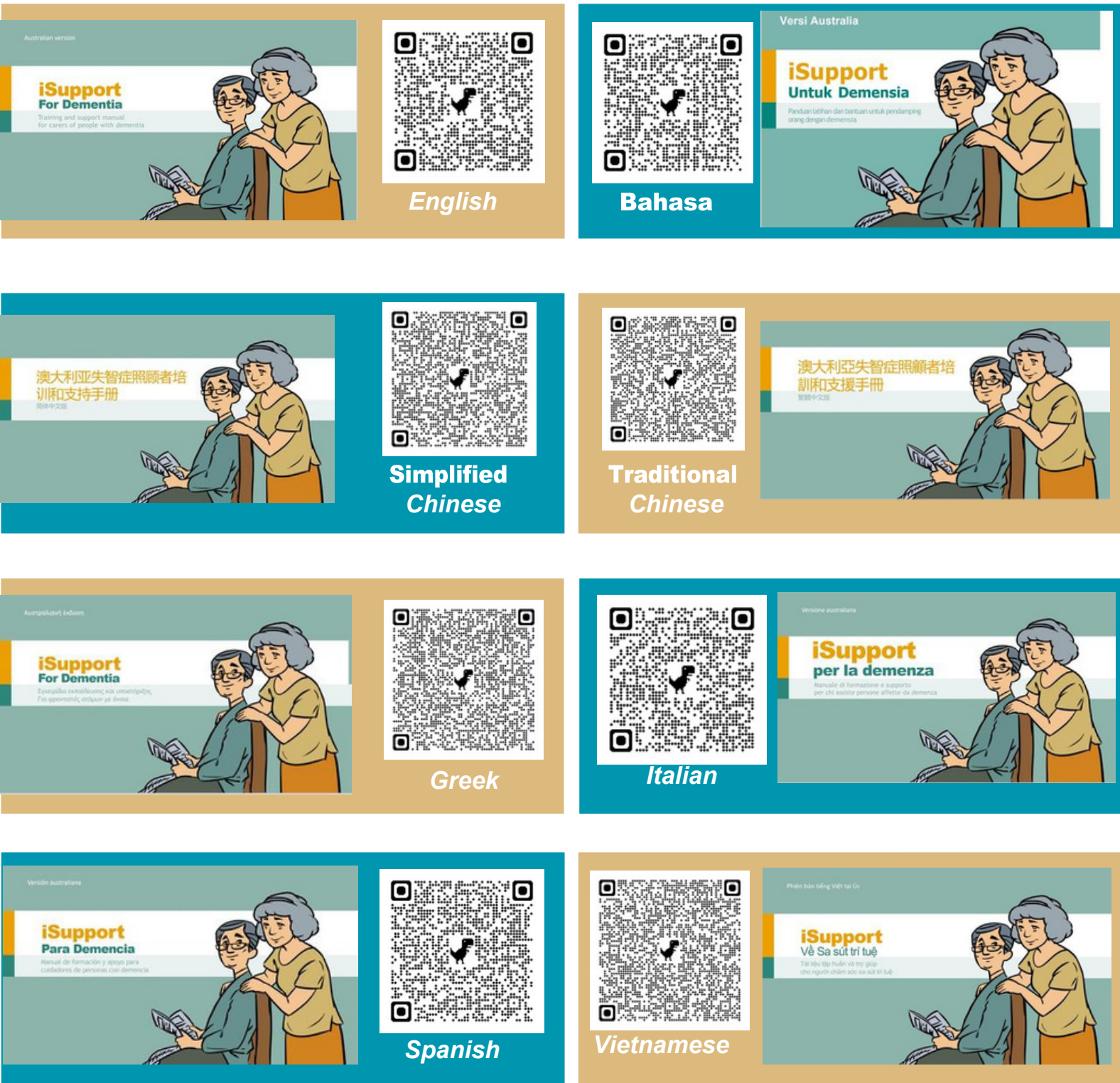
Vietnamese (Tiếng Việt)

https://researchnow.flinders.edu.au/files/194215302/Xiao_iSupport_P2025_Vietnamese.pdf

For more information, please contact

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Appendix 2 QR Codes for multiple language versions of iSupport program in Australia



For more information, please contact
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Appendix 3 Outline of the iSupport for dementia program

Modules = 6	Units = 30	My study plan: select relevant units to study
<p>1. Introduction to dementia: This module introduces dementia and explains how it affects individuals. It also outlines the different types of dementia and their common symptoms.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is dementia? 2. Timely diagnosis of dementia has many benefits 3. Using memory aids in your care activities 4. How to respond to repetitive behaviour 5. How to avoid conversations that may trigger changed behaviour 	Date:
<p>2. Being a carer This module supports you in building the knowledge and skills required to care for a loved one living with dementia.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The journey together 2. Improving communication 3. Supported decision-making 1. 4. Involving others 	Date:
<p>3. Caring for yourself Taking care of yourself is important when caring for a loved one. This module introduces a range of self-care strategies to help reduce stress.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reducing stress in everyday life 2. Making time for pleasant activities 2. 3. Thinking differently 	Date:
<p>4. Providing everyday care Dementia can affect the person's ability to perform everyday tasks. This module enables you to assist your loved one to maintain everyday activities.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Eating and drinking-more pleasant mealtimes 2. Eating, drinking and preventing health problems 3. Toileting and continence care 4. Personal care 5. An enjoyable day 	Date:
<p>5. Dealing with changed behaviour Dementia can affect a person's ability to carry out everyday tasks. This module helps you support your loved one in maintaining daily activities.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction to person-centred care approach 2. Aggression 3. Changes in mood or interest 4. Difficulty sleeping 5. Delusions and hallucinations 6. Walking and getting lost 7. Changes in judgement 	Date:
<p>6. My engagement in consumer-directed care This module helps you understand the range of aged care services available and how to choose services that meet your loved one's care needs.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Making informed choices in dementia care 2. Services that are available for younger onset dementia 3. Carer support 4. Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Service 5. Support at Home 6. Relinquishing the carer role 	Date:

Note: By March 2026, the iSupport program is available in 8 languages via Flinders University iSupport website: English, Greek, Indonesian Bahasa, Italian, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Unites slightly differ among different language versions.

Appendix 4 A meeting agenda for the carer peer support group

1.The facilitator welcomes carers to the meeting.
2.The facilitator explains the ground rules which emphasise equal opportunity for participation, respecting others and maintaining confidentiality for what carers shared in the meeting.
3.The facilitator moderates the discussion to allow each carer to share their experiences in the program and clarify issues when needed.
4.The facilitator prompts carers to share their experiences in the iSupport program and uses these probe questions when appropriate:
4.1. What have you studied from the iSupport manual and associated resources?
4.2. How have the iSupport program changed your thoughts in dementia care?
4.3. How has the iSupport program changed your interactions with your care recipients?
4.4. What difficulties have you experienced as a carer?
4.5. What positive experiences have you experienced as a carer?
5.The facilitator briefly summarises the discussion, encourages carers to engage in the program and closes the meeting.

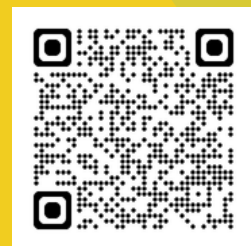
**Appendix 5 Facilitator records
on needs-based support for carers**

Date/time	Carer name	Reason for request	Preferred contact	Support provided	Follow up & outcomes
<i>Example</i>	<i>Jan Smith</i>	<i>Wandering at night</i>	Phone number:	<p>Coached Jan to use the ABC approach to identify triggers of nighttime wandering and try to avoid those triggers.</p> <p>Recommended Jan to study iSupport module 5, etc.</p>	<p>XX date: Jan increased gardening activities for her husband during the daytime, reduced daytime sleep.</p> <p>Wandering at night reduced after these interventions.</p>

Implementing iSupport in Dementia Care

A Playbook for Carers and Professionals

April 2026



QR code to
access this playbook



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