

Impact of the Minds Together program for family and friends supporting someone with their mental health

Background

Minds Together for family and friends supporting someone with their mental health is one of a suite of programs developed for partners, spouses, family members, friends and colleagues who provide unpaid support for people experiencing mental health concerns or suicidal distress in Australia.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that caregivers experience several benefits, including enhanced enjoyment of their role and a strengthened relationship with the person they support. However, caregivers also consistently report poorer outcomes than the general population, including lower quality of life, poorer mental and physical health, and reduced education and employment opportunities.

Research indicates that targeted support programs can improve the health and wellbeing outcomes of family and friends who provide care, bolstering their capacity and motivation to continue providing care.

Until recently, there were limited supports specifically for family and friends of a person with depressive or anxiety symptoms. In 2018, Everymind initiated the development, piloting and implementation of the *Minds Together* support program for these families and friends. These research activities undertaken during this process contributed to establishing the novelty, feasibility and acceptability of this support program.

This current study aimed to provide a deeper understanding of the societal and economic significance of the research, examining the activities and impact of the *Minds Together* program for family and friends supporting someone with their mental health.

Summary of the research

- Everymind conducted a series of studies from 2018-2023 to develop, pilot and evaluate the *Minds Together* program for family and friends supporting someone with their mental health, with a focus on depressive and anxiety symptoms.
- Outcomes from these studies have been reported (e.g. Fitzgeraldson et al., 2022; Fitzgeraldson et al., 2023). However, there was a need to explore the broader benefits and lessons learned from this research overall.
- In the current study, Everymind worked with health economists from Hunter Medical Research Institute (HMRI) to apply the Framework to Assess the Impact from Translational Health Research (FAIT) and assess the activities and impacts of the *Minds Together* research program.



Outcomes from the research

- The results indicated widespread research benefits, including knowledge advancement, capacity building, economic and societal benefits and changes to practice.
- Economic analysis revealed a substantial return on investment **exceeding \$80,000**. The research translation story highlighted the important role of research centre staff in reflecting on and incorporating research learning into practice.
- This study offers a unique perspective on the benefits of prevention-focused research targeting family and friends supporting someone with mental health concerns. The findings show the benefits of drawing on health economics perspectives to identify research benefits and emphasise the value of investing in this type of research.

[Read the full published paper](#)