

The Family and Friends Support Program: A Pilot Study Examining Usability, Acceptability, and Feasibility

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Introduction: Despite the known psychosocial challenges associated with supporting a loved one using alcohol and other drugs (AOD), there is a scarcity of wellbeing interventions for affected family members and friends (AFFMs). This pilot study examines the usability, acceptability, and feasibility of the Family and Friend Support Program (FFSP; ffsp.com.au), a world-first, evidence-based online resilience and wellbeing program designed with and for people caring for someone using AOD.

Methods: In 2021 (November-December), participants across Australia completed a baseline online cross-sectional survey that assessed impact of caring for a loved one using AOD (adapted Short Questionnaire for Family Members (Affected by Addiction)), and distress levels (Kessler-10 Psychological Distress Scale). Following baseline, participants were invited to interact with FFSP over 10 weeks. Post program and follow up surveys (10- and 14-weeks post-baseline, respectively) and semi-structured interviews assessed usability and acceptability of the program as well as help-seeking experiences and barriers.

Results: Baseline, post-program, and follow-up surveys were completed by 131, 49, and 32 AFFMs, respectively, with 5 participants completing qualitative interviews. On average, K-10 scores fell in the moderate to severe range ($M = 28.4$, $SD 8.6$). Overall, participants found the FFSP easy to use and understand and validated their experiences. Key limitations were low program engagement and high attrition.

Discussions and Conclusions: Overall, FFSP appears to be a promising and acceptable wellbeing intervention for AFFMs. This study highlights ongoing barriers to help-seeking and considerations to improve the program and enhance engagement.

Implications for Practice or Policy: FFSP addresses an important gap in services as a low-barrier early-intervention option for AFFMs learning to manage their role as a carer and advocate for their loved one using AOD. This study adds to the growing research demonstrating high levels of distress and strain among AFFMs and highlighting the need for further research and investment into accessible support.

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