‘I just take them because I know the people that give them to me’: A theory-informed interview study of community-dwelling people with dementia and carers' perspectives of medicines management

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Abstract

Objective: Identify facilitators and barriers to successful medicines management for people with dementia (PwD) in primary care from the perspectives of community-dwelling PwD and carers.

Methods: Semi-structured interviews conducted with PwD and carers in Northern Ireland. The 14-domain Theoretical Domains Framework guided data collection and analysis. Interviews explored participants’ experiences and perceptions of medicines management. PwD also completed the Beliefs about Medicines Questionnaire indicating their level of agreement with statements about medicines. Qualitative data were analysed using the framework method and content analysis. Quantitative data were analysed descriptively.

Results: Eighteen PwD and 15 carers were interviewed. PwD believed they were competent with medicines management (‘beliefs about capabilities’). Most PwD reported having strategies to prompt them to take their medicines (‘memory, attention and decision processes’). Carers played an important role in supporting PwD with medicines management (‘social influences’) and monitoring adherence (‘behavioural regulation’) and anticipated having to take on a greater role as patients’ cognitive impairment worsened (‘beliefs about consequences’). Participants highlighted assistance provided by community pharmacies with medicines acquisition and delivery (‘environmental context and resources’) and placed great trust in primary healthcare professionals (‘social influences’). PwD had positive attitudes towards medication and believed strongly in the necessity of their medicines.

Conclusions: This is the first study to use a theoretical approach to explore medicines management for community-dwelling PwD. The findings provide new insights into the critical role of carers in facilitating optimal medicines management and will

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inform future intervention development, in which carers’ needs assessment and involvement will be key.

**KEYWORDS**
beliefs about medicines, carers, dementia, medicines management, primary health care, qualitative research, theoretical domains framework

**Key Points**
- This study used qualitative methods to explore the experiences of community-dwelling people with dementia (PwD) and their carers about medicines management. The beliefs of PwD about medicines were also determined using a validated questionnaire.
- PwD generally did not perceive medicines management to be an issue for them at the time of interview and they displayed positive beliefs about medicines. All of the PwD interviewed had carer assistance with medicines. Carers were concerned about the future and how medicines management may become more problematic as the PwD’s cognitive and functional abilities declined.
- These findings are in contrast with the views of primary healthcare professionals and other findings previously reported in the literature, where issues and concerns about adherence to medication in particular are highlighted.
- Carers will be a fundamental part of any future intervention that is developed to improve medicines management for PwD. Understanding how PwD, and especially those living alone, manage their medicines at different stages of the disease trajectory is needed to inform future interventions.

**1 INTRODUCTION**

Medicines are important for people with dementia (PwD), for management of the condition and co-morbidities. Medicines management, comprising ‘the entire way medicines are selected, procured, delivered, prescribed, administered and reviewed to optimise the contribution they make to producing informed and desired outcomes of patient care’, raises unique challenges for PwD. Due to multimorbidity, PwD are likely to be prescribed multiple medications (polypharmacy), resulting in complex medication regimens. Polypharmacy is a risk factor for potentially inappropriate prescribing, associated with increased risk of adverse drug events, hospitalisation, mortality, increased healthcare costs, and reduced quality of life. PwD’s beliefs about medicines and treatment expectations may also influence prescribing. Management of non-cognitive symptoms may challenge prescribers and those assisting with medication administration. Impairment of cognitive and communication abilities in PwD, together with their beliefs about medicines, may result in non-adherence and medication-related hospital admissions. Prudent medicines management is therefore vital for improving outcomes for PwD and reducing medicines-related harm.

With cognitive and functional decline, increased assistance with medicines from carers (formal/informal) is needed. Studies report informal carers may have difficulty managing complicated medication regimens typical in PwD, adding to their considerable burden. If carers become unable to cope, alternative options, such as care home placement, may be required. There is limited research on medicines management in community-dwelling PwD; carers’ perspectives often dominate, with fewer PwD participating in previously published interview studies. Additionally, experiences of PwD living alone have not been established; such individuals are at greater risk of medication self-administration errors and non-adherence than PwD with support.

Interventions to improve medicines management for PwD are needed. This study was part of a larger project, the overall aim of which was to develop an intervention to improve medicines management for PwD in primary care. The focus was those living in the community, who constitute the majority of PwD, many of whom live alone. In line with Medical Research Council guidance, a theory-base was incorporated during intervention development. The Theoretical Domains Framework (TDF) was used to understand behaviours and processes associated with medicines management amongst key stakeholders (i.e., PwD, carers, general practitioners (GPs) and community pharmacists). The 14 theoretical domains may act as barriers or facilitators to an individual’s behaviour (Table S1).

Therefore, the aim of this study was to explore perspectives of community-dwelling PwD and their carers about medicines management (prescribing, dispensing, administration, adherence and review) using a theory-informed approach, to identify facilitators and barriers to successful medicines management. Findings from healthcare professional interviews are reported elsewhere.
2 | METHODS

Face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were conducted with community-dwelling PwD and their carers in Northern Ireland (NI). Ethical approval was provided by East of England—Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Research Ethics Committee (15/EE/0103). The study is reported according to the Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ) checklist (Table S2).

2.1 | Participant sampling and recruitment

Based on previous experience, a number of sampling approaches were used, with assistance provided by research nurses from NI Clinical Research Network (NICRN).

2.1.1 | Memory clinics

PwD/carer dyads were recruited through two memory clinics in Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. Research nurses screened PwD and carers against inclusion criteria and clinicians confirmed potential participants' eligibility. PwD were eligible if they had a dementia diagnosis (any type), living in their own home, prescribed ≥4 regular medications (this numerical cut-off was used in preceding pharmacoepidemiological research), and capable of undertaking an interview. Carers were eligible if they had contact with the PwD at least three times a week and assisted with medicines. Potential participants were approached by a clinician or research nurse, provided with study information, and followed up by telephone after one week by a researcher.

2.1.2 | Primary care

Ten GP surgeries across NI were recruited as part of the larger project. We anticipated this recruitment method would identify PwD living on their own who may not receive assistance with medicines. Inclusion criteria were the same as those described above; however, PwD had to be living alone in their own home. Research nurses screened practice records against inclusion criteria, and GPs reviewed the resultant list to confirm eligibility. Study information was mailed to potential participants, who were followed up by telephone after one week by a research nurse.

2.1.3 | Join dementia research

Following slow recruitment of PwD through primary care, the Join Dementia Research (JDR; www.joindementiaresearch.nihr.ac.uk) database was used. This United Kingdom-based service allows people to volunteer to participate in dementia research. The online portal matched potentially eligible PwD, using the same inclusion criteria for those recruited through primary care. A researcher telephoned individuals to confirm eligibility. Written information was sent to those who expressed interest in participating, and the researcher followed-up by telephone after one week.

2.2 | Procedure

Interviews were conducted by two researchers (Heather E. Barry, Máiréad McGrattan; both pharmacists) in patients' homes between October 2015 and November 2016. All participants provided informed consent and were offered £50 for participation. Interviews with PwD/carer dyads were designed to be conducted separately. However, if PwD preferred to be interviewed with their carer present, this was respected.

Interview topic guides, based on the TDF, were designed iteratively through discussions within the research team. Separate topic guides were developed for PwD and carers, following a similar format (Data S3 and S4). To ensure a shared understanding of medicines management, participants were provided with an explanation of the term, and asked to reflect upon their experiences, roles and responsibilities. Questions framed according to the 14 TDF domains, explored participants' perceptions of barriers and facilitators to achieving successful medicines management (using prompts where appropriate). All interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, checked for accuracy and anonymised. Codes were assigned to differentiate between PwD and carer (CA) participants, together with a two-digit identification number.

PwD's beliefs about prescribed medication and medicines in general were assessed using the Beliefs about Medicines Questionnaire (BMQ). To minimise participant fatigue and burden, this was administered either after the interview or left with the PwD to complete in their own time. The BMQ contains 18 items and comprises two subscales. The BMQ-Specific subscale measures beliefs about the necessity of prescribed medication (five items) and assesses concerns about potential negative consequences of taking prescribed medicines (five items). The BMQ-General subscale measures views about overuse of medicines (four items) and perceptions of possible harm (four items) from taking medicines in general. Responses are recorded on a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A total score for each subscale (necessity, concerns, overuse, harm) is calculated from the sum of individual items within each scale; higher scores indicate stronger beliefs in the concepts represented by the scale.

2.3 | Analysis

PwD and carer interviews were analysed separately using NVivo 11. Two researchers (Heather E. Barry, Máiréad McGrattan) independently analysed each transcript, based upon the approach used in the larger study. The framework method was used initially to deductively analyse data using TDF domains as coding categories. A framework matrix was generated for each participant group (PwD, carers) to summarise data. Content analysis of each framework matrix was performed inductively to identify barriers and facilitators within each TDF domain. The researchers met frequently
to discuss coding; any disagreements were resolved through discussion with another researcher (Carmel M. Hughes).

Quantitative data were coded, entered into SPSS Statistics v22, and descriptive analyses (frequencies, proportions, means and standard deviations [SD]) conducted. A mean and median score was calculated for each BMQ subscale (necessity, concerns, overuse and harm). Missing data were excluded from analyses.

3 | RESULTS

3.1 | Participant characteristics

Eighteen PwD and 15 carers participated in the study (Table 1). Twenty-four PwD/carer dyads were invited to participate in the study via the memory clinics; 15 dyads agreed to participate, although one patient refused to be interviewed. Seven PwD chose to be interviewed with their carer present and six were interviewed separately. Despite 60 PwD living alone being invited to participate through primary care, only three were recruited. Individuals were either unable to be contacted, lacked capacity to undertake an interview or did not wish to participate. Whilst 23 PwD matched with the study on JDR, 17 did not meet eligibility criteria, and the researcher was unable to make contact with five. The remaining patient agreed to participate. Interviews lasted 27.1 (±SD 15.9) minutes on average (range: 10–62 min).

3.2 | Summary of findings from TDF analysis

PwD felt their responsibility was to take their medicines as prescribed and adhere to their medication regimen, whilst carers emphasised their supportive role to ensure that the PwD had taken their medications (‘social/professional role and identity’). Carers identified a number of medicines management activities they undertook, including prescription ordering and acquisition, collection of medicines from the pharmacy, dispensing medicines into an adherence aid, administration of medicines and monitoring patient adherence. However, carers’ roles varied depending upon the extent of community pharmacy involvement and the severity of the PwD’s condition:

Well I’m one hundred percent responsible, that’s how I feel now. And I just wonder if there have been mistakes made in the past…? [CA_02]

If she forgets, I have to say ‘Did you take that one?’ and I have to be there because she might say she did and she didn’t. [CA_07]

PwD described feeling competent and confident about medicine-taking, and did not report having any issues with medicines management (‘beliefs about capabilities’). PwD identified that having input from a carer (‘social influences’) was a facilitator:

I can take my medicines without any bother, I feel very confident. I just take them because I know the people that give me them ...so I don’t worry. [PwD_02]

I can no longer deal with it by myself...I’m confident that my wife will do the right thing. [PwD_04]

PwD described a range of emotions associated with medicine-taking. While most felt content about taking their medicines (‘emotion’), one described feeling frustrated about their dependence on others, and another described feeling fear and anger if they forgot to take their medicines:

I can’t hold onto [medicines] information so I’m left in a position where I’m in a dependency. That’s a frustration. [PwD_04]

I’d be afraid without them...It would annoy me if I forgot. [PwD_13]

PwD and carers talked about the importance of medicine-taking as part of a routine, linked to other tasks such as mealtimes or bedtime. Many participants displayed high motivation to ensure medication adherence and prioritised medicine-taking (‘goals’) to ensure well-being and prevent adverse effects (‘beliefs about consequences’):

I can no longer deal with it by myself...I’m confident that my wife will do the right thing. [PwD_04]

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| TABLE 1 | People with dementia (PwD) and carer participant characteristics |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| **Gender** | **PwD (n = 18)** | **Carers (n = 15)** |
| Male | 9 | 2 |
| Female | 9 | 13 |
| **Recruitment method** | **PwD (n = 18)** | **Carers (n = 15)** |
| Memory clinics | 14 | 15 |
| Primary care | 3 | 0 |
| Join Dementia Research (JDR) database | 1 | 0 |

*Fifteen patient/carer dyads were recruited through memory clinics but one patient refused to be interviewed.*
It's top priority. If you don't take them [tablets] you die, it's as simple as that. [PwD_12]

The priority is that she takes her medicines, no more than prescribed, she gets the benefit from them, and there are no safety issues through taking too many of them. [CA_06]

Most PwD reported having strategies to remind them to take their medicines ('memory, attention and decision processes') such as a weekly adherence aid or checklist ('environmental context and resources'), and all received assistance from an informal (e.g., family member) or formal carer (linked to 'social influences'):

They're all separate, in wee slots [compliance aid], you just split the slot open and get what you want for that morning, and there's a different one for the night. [PwD_01]

It's just a routine I do first thing in the morning. He [husband] makes me my breakfast and I take my medications then. [PwD_05]

It was apparent that carers played an important role in prompting PwD to take their medicines ('social influences'), checking to ensure medication adherence ('behavioural regulation') and (in one case) rewarding the PwD for taking their medicines ('reinforcement'):

When he's taken these [tablets] I give him two squares of chocolate. It's just a wee thing. I say 'Once you have these down you can have this.' [CA_05]

When I put them [tablets] in the little egg cup in the morning I know if they've disappeared. I don't stand over him and say "Did you swallow those?" Maybe I should do that, I don't know. [CA_14]

In addition, many PwD made use of community pharmacy services such as prescription ordering and delivery ('environmental context and resources'). PwD and carers placed great trust in healthcare professionals such as their GP and community pharmacist ('social influences'):

They're [GP and pharmacist] the experts, there's nothing to suggest that what I'm getting is doing me harm rather than helping me. I would place a lot of trust in their knowledge and judgement. [PwD_07]

PwD appeared to have limited understanding about their medicines ('knowledge'), and their cognitive deficits were a barrier to retaining knowledge about medicines. However, PwD appeared to be content with this because of carer and healthcare professional support. Carers, on the other hand, were much more knowledgeable about PwD's medications although this varied. Carers' knowledge was facilitated by accessing other sources of information, including patient information leaflets and the internet. However, some indicated that they wanted further information, particularly about medication indications:

Don't ask me what kinds of medicines. All I know is they are all tablets... I don't know what they're for. [PwD_02]

...So for someone to sit down and say 'This is what they're for, there may be side effects' and name a few... I think that is a good idea. [CA_13]

While carers were optimistic about overcoming problems or issues with medicines management ('optimism'), they were fearful about cognitive decline, and how this may impact upon the PwD's medicine-taking abilities in the future ('beliefs about consequences'). This was linked to a perceived lack of confidence ('beliefs about capabilities') about how to ensure the PwD adhered to their medication regimen despite their best intentions ('intentions'). Carers were apprehensive about this ('emotion'):

What happens in the future... I start to worry about that. [CA_05]

Well I would get anxious if he got to the stage where he didn't want to take them [tablets]. [CA_11]

While carers talked about positive relationships they had with healthcare professionals ('social influences'), they also discussed barriers including GP accessibility, lack of continuity in GPs, and limited time to discuss medication issues during a ten-minute appointment. In contrast, accessibility of community pharmacists was acknowledged as a facilitator:

I mean, all you have to do is stand there for five minutes, and in between dispensing they [pharmacist] will come out and have a chat. [CA_06]

3.3 | Beliefs about medicines

Completed BMQs were received from 15 PwD. Table 2 shows participants' responses to individual statements from the BMQ Specific and General subscales. The mean score for the necessity subscale of the BMQ was 21.7 (±SD 2.9), indicating that participants had strong beliefs, relative to the mid-point of the scale, in necessity of their medicines for maintaining health (Table 3). Mean scores for the concerns, overuse and harm subscales were 11.3 (±SD 3.8), 7.9 (±SD 1.9) and 10.4 (±SD 1.6) respectively, indicating lower levels of specific concerns about their medications and less general concerns about medication
overuse and harms, relative to the mid-points of these three scales. Standard deviations calculated for each of these four sub-scales for the BMQ also provide evidence for variability, and hence diversity, in beliefs about medicines across the PwD participants.

4 | DISCUSSION

This is one of only two studies, to our knowledge, to use a theory-based approach to explore experiences of community-dwelling PwD and their carers about medicines management, and determine beliefs of PwD about medicines. 41 It extends a limited evidence base to provide valuable findings for future intervention development to improve medicines management for PwD. This study emphasises that carers provide critical assistance with medicines for many PwD and their input will be integral to future interventions. 27,41 In addition, intervention components may need to be tailored according to disease trajectory, cognitive function, and personal circumstances of PwD (if they have carer support or are living alone).

**TABLE 2** Responses to statements from the Beliefs about Medicines Questionnaire (BMQ) from people with dementia (PwD)

| BMQ specific                                                                 | N (%) | Strongly agree/agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree/strongly disagree | Missing |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------|
| My health, at present, depends on my medicines (N)                           | 15 (83.3) | -                    | -                         | 3 (16.7) |         |
| Having to take medicines worries me (C)                                      | 2 (11.1) | -                    | 13 (72.2)                 | 3 (16.7) |         |
| My life would be impossible without my medicines (N)                         | 9 (50.0) | 4 (22.2)             | 2 (11.2)                  | 3 (16.7) |         |
| Without my medicines I would be very ill (N)                                | 11 (61.1) | 3 (16.7)             | 1 (5.6)                   | 3 (16.7) |         |
| I sometimes worry about the long-term effect of my medicines (C)             | 2 (11.2) | 4 (22.2)             | 9 (50.0)                  | 3 (16.7) |         |
| My medicines are a mystery to me (C)                                         | 5 (27.8) | 3 (16.7)             | 7 (38.9)                  | 3 (16.7) |         |
| My health in the future will depend on my medicines (N)                      | 14 (77.8) | 1 (5.6)              | -                         | 3 (16.7) |         |
| My medicines disrupt my life (C)                                             | 2 (11.1) | -                    | 13 (72.2)                 | 3 (16.7) |         |
| I sometimes worry about becoming too dependent on my medicines (C)           | 3 (16.7) | 2 (11.1)             | 10 (66.7)                 | 3 (16.7) |         |
| My medicines protect me from becoming worse (N)                              | 14 (77.8) | -                    | 1 (5.6)                   | 3 (16.7) |         |

| BMQ general                                                                  |       |                      |                           |                           |         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------|
| Doctors use too many medicines (O)                                           | 2 (11.1) | 6 (33.3)             | 7 (38.9)                  | 3 (16.7) |         |
| People who take medicines should stop their treatment for a while every now and again (H) | - | 4 (22.2) | 11 (61.1) | 3 (16.7) |         |
| Most medicines are addictive (H)                                             | 2 (11.1) | 7 (38.9)             | 6 (33.4)                  | 3 (16.7) |         |
| Natural remedies are safer than medicines (O)                                | 2 (11.1) | 6 (33.4)             | 7 (38.9)                  | 3 (16.7) |         |
| Medicines do more harm than good (H)                                         | -     | 1 (5.6)              | 14 (77.7)                 | 3 (16.7) |         |
| All medicines are poisons (H)                                                 | 1 (5.6) | 2 (11.1)             | 12 (66.6)                 | 3 (16.7) |         |
| Doctors place too much trust on medicines (O)                                | -     | 5 (27.8)             | 10 (55.6)                 | 3 (16.7) |         |
| If doctors had more time with patients they would prescribe fewer medicines (O) | 2 (11.1) | 9 (50.0)             | 4 (22.2)                  | 3 (16.7) |         |

Abbreviations: C, concerns sub-scale item; H, Harm sub-scale item; N, necessity sub-scale item; O, overuse sub-scale item.

**TABLE 3** Beliefs of people with dementia (PwD) about medicines

| Beliefs about Medicines Questionnaire subscale | Mean score (SD) | Median (range) |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Necessity<sup>a</sup>                          | 21.7 (2.9)      | 22.0 (16.0–25.0)|
| Concerns<sup>a</sup>                          | 11.3 (3.8)      | 11.0 (7.0–21.0)|
| General overuse<sup>b</sup>                    | 7.9 (1.9)       | 7.0 (5.0–11.0)|
| General harm<sup>b</sup>                       | 10.4 (1.6)      | 10.0 (7.0–14.0)|

<sup>a</sup>Scale from 5 to 25, where high scores indicate strong belief.
<sup>b</sup>Scale from 4 to 20, where high scores indicate negative attitudes towards medicines.
This study included a greater number of PwD \( (n = 18) \) than reported previously; other studies were dominated by carer participation.\(^5,17-20,21\) This is a key strength; the ‘patient voice’ is missing from the literature,\(^42\) and it is important to portray and consider views of PwD to inform intervention development. Participants revealed they did not experience any major issues with medicines management at the time of interview and were happy with the status quo, contrasting with other studies,\(^16,17,18\) and concerns expressed by healthcare professionals, particularly about adherence.\(^16,17,30\) Whilst cognitive status was not assessed, PwD appeared to have mild-moderate cognitive impairment, received appropriate support from their GP surgery and community pharmacy, and all had a formal/informal carer to assist with medicines. In addition, PwD displayed positive beliefs about medicines, particularly medication necessity, which likely explains the observed intrinsic motivation towards medicine-taking and adherence.\(^9,43\) Beliefs about medication are shown to be potentially important determinants of adherence in cognitively intact older adults.\(^44-47\) Our findings suggest that such beliefs may also exert influence on PwD, although this would need to be confirmed with larger sample sizes. Conversely, carers anticipated future difficulties with medicine administration and adherence, when refusal of medicines and difficulties with swallowing may be apparent.\(^16,43\) Disparity between PwD and carer views may also be due to the nature of the condition and impact that dementia may have on PwD’s problem-solving, judgement and decision-making abilities. However, it has been reported that self-ratings by those with early-stage dementia about their medication management abilities were more accurate than those provided by carers.\(^48\) Future work should focus on determining medicines management experiences and beliefs about medicines of community-dwelling PwD at moderate to severe stages of the condition (the needs of those living in care homes are already established) and their carers.

This study identified some similar barriers and facilitators to successful medicines management for PwD to those already identified in the literature, such as the importance of carers, having supportive and trusting relationships with healthcare professionals, carers’ desire for further information about medicines, and use of cues and reminder strategies.\(^15,16,18,20,21,41,48\) However, we also report some contrasting findings. For example, difficulties in obtaining prescriptions and medicine supplies have been reported previously,\(^11,17,18\); this was not an issue for participants in our study because much of the burden associated with these tasks was removed by community pharmacists. This study also identified aspects of medicines management not previously reported. A more detailed explanation of carers’ roles in ensuring adherence and the reassurance that a carer provides to PwD were noted, likely related to the structured analytical approach offered by the TDF. In contrast to other studies which focused more specifically on distinct parts of the medicines management process, particularly adherence, we took a broader approach to ensure that issues of significance to PwD and carers were not overlooked. Relevance of individual TDF domains was not assessed as the remainder of the analysis in relation to intervention development focused predominantly on healthcare professional data.\(^30\) However domains such as skills and optimism, were seldom discussed by participants.

Insights from this study should also inform future clinical practice. Primary healthcare professionals should seek to engage with carers of PwD soon after diagnosis, so that they can work collaboratively and form good working relationships. GPs and community pharmacists should hold contact details for carers so that medicines information can be relayed, and issues resolved in a timely manner. Our previous work indicated that healthcare professionals value carer input with medicines,\(^30\) however they should be mindful of carers’ knowledge and educational needs. While carer support is important throughout the disease course, this will become more critical with disease progression to avoid additional burden and stress placed upon them by medicines management.

### 4.1 Strengths and limitations

A major strength of this study was that most accounts from PwD were triangulated with those of their carer, which allowed needs and experiences of both key stakeholders to be considered. It should be noted, however, that findings represent the views and perspectives of PwD and carers who were interviewed, and are therefore subject to any reporting biases pertinent to PwD and carers in this context and at that time. Interviewer bias was minimised by adopting a reflexive interviewing style, conducting regular debriefing sessions during data collection, and having regular meetings with the wider research team to discuss and agree upon analysis. We acknowledge the self-reported dementia diagnosis provided by the participant recruited through JDR is a limitation. In addition, participants’ level of cognitive impairment was not measured in this study; further work is needed to fully ascertain medicines management issues experienced by community-dwelling PwD and their carers at moderate to advanced stages of the condition, enabling any future intervention to be adapted and refined accordingly. One limitation was the difficulty in trying to recruit PwD living alone, despite taking a number of approaches to sampling.\(^31\) Such patients are at risk of social isolation, receiving inadequate medical supervision and having unmet medical needs.\(^26,49\) It is still unknown as to how they cope with medicines management; future work must identify their needs so that appropriate support can be provided.

### 5 Conclusion

This study provides a rich insight into the experiences and views of PwD and their carers about medicines management. The findings from this study have extended the evidence-base for complex intervention development in this area and have emphasised the importance of integrating carers of PwD and their needs into the design of future interventions to support medicines management.
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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on reasonable request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to the content of information that could compromise research participant privacy/consent.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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