

Connected Health Sustaining Home Stay with Dementia – Attitudes from Caregivers.

Background

Dementia diagnoses are expected to increase, and with annual treatment costs of €40,500 per person in Ireland, new strategies are needed to manage dementia within the health service's means. A Connected Health (CH) model of care promotes the use of innovative technologies to support people with dementia (PwD) and their carers in the home, facilitate a proactive approach to care, decrease burden on the carer, and potentially sustain PwD in their homes for longer. This study aimed to explore caregivers' attitudes towards the use of CH technologies in supporting homestay in PwD.

Methods

A qualitative approach was utilised. Carers of PwD were invited to participate in a focus group interview. Prior to the interview, participants tested a CH device, i.e. a tablet computer with an application that monitors, and provides feedback and resources to PwD and their carers. Following this, their attitudes towards the utility of CH technologies was discussed. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, coded and then categorised according to themes.

Results

In total, six carers participated in the focus group. Three were full-time live in carers, and the remainder were involved in the PwD's care at least five days a week. Three main themes emerged:

- 1) 'Life in Real-time' – carers reported that objective recording of patient-related information may facilitate improved information sharing with healthcare professionals.
- 2) 'Activities of Daily Living' – carers discussed the usefulness of information regarding PwD's physical activity and sleep, for encouraging improved behaviours.
- 3) 'Utility of Connected Health' – carers considered the burden of introducing such devices into the home, in particular for those who were not living with the PwD.

Conclusions

Carers had positive attitudes regarding the implementation of CH devices in PwD's homes. However, longitudinal research is required to explore the acceptance of these technologies on a long-term basis.