PO2.17 Training people with dementia and their caregivers in the use of a web-based support tool: Lessons learned

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Background

Introduction

The provision of adequate care for people living with dementia/cognitive impairment (PwD/CI) and cared for in the community by informal carers is set to become the main challenge in dementia care (Meiland et al., 2012). Assistive technologies are gaining pace as a means of supporting PwD/CI and have been shown to have a positive impact (e.g. Meiland et al., 2012; Holthe et al., 2018; O'Connor et al., 2017).

Access to technology and the internet is not enough to embed digital interventions in the lives of PwD/CI; many PwD/CI and their carers may not be existing users of technology (Prescott, 2017). The barriers to daily use of technologies include limited access, interest or motivation, and a lack of skills and knowledge of how to use what is on offer (Age UK, 2013). Appropriate and tailored support is crucial; when successfully delivered, digital skills training has been found to have a significantly positive impact on PwD/CI and their carers (Tinder Foundation, 2016).

The CAREGIVERSPRO-MMD European Study: An overview

CAREGIVERSPRO-MMD is a Horizon 2020 pan-European study investigating the efficacy of a supportive website for people with PwD/CI and their informal carers. The aims of the website are (1) peer support (2) providing information about dementia/cognitive impairment, being a carer, services and resources (3) pleasure / enjoyment. The main features of the site include a newsfeed; games; and a memory loss and support information library. The study has sites in France, Spain, Italy and the UK. Participants are dyads consisting of PwD/CI and their informal carers, with each site having a control and intervention group. Intervention groups received a tablet device and access to the website. Primary outcome measures are quality of life and carer burden taken at 0, 6 and 12 months.

The CAREGIVERSPRO-MMD UK Sample

- 100 dyads randomly assigned to control (*n*=49) and intervention (*n*=51) groups. Drop-out rate 25%, leaving a total of 75 dyads (control n=39, intervention n=36).
- Across the whole sample, 61.3% of PwD/CI have dementia and 41.8% have cognitive impairment. Mini-mental state exam (MMSE) score for PwD/CI at baseline mean = 22.51 (SD = 4.63), range = 12-30.
- In the intervention group, 88.9% had an internet connection at home at baseline. However, 8.3% of carers and 47.2% of PwD/CI said that they never use it.

Impact of Training Sessions on Use of Website

71.1% Attended at least 1 session

63.2% Attended multiple sessions

No. of sessions attended	Mean number of Visits	Mean number of Actions	Mean time spent (seconds)
0-1 (*n*=28)	9.00 (11.84)	101.29 (99.65)	5228.07 (5188.63)
2+ (*n*=48)	158.60 (157.20)	1510.44 (1573.83)	83457.15 (85196.48)
2+ group:	Sig. more visits U=126, p<.001	Sig. more actions U=132, p<.001	Sig. more time spent U=154, p<.001

The UK Engagement Programme

Overview

The UK team recognised that without sufficient engagement methods, uptake of the CAREGIVERSPRO-MMD website was likely to be low, particularly among PwD/CI, and its potential benefits may not be realised. The team therefore elected to include an engagement programme as a part of the intervention, followed by an evaluative qualitative research element. The engagement programme consisted of initial one-to-one training, group training sessions, supporting documents, supportive interactions on the website, and ongoing availability of technical support. During this time, we tried a range of different methods of delivery at the group training sessions to enhance learning. The most successful of these methods are outlined below.

Training Methods

- *Microsoft PowerPoint.* Initial training was delivered using MS PowerPoint to guide people through the basics. This method of delivery was successful in getting people started, but as participants learnt how to use the website they were moving at different rates and a new method of delivery was needed.
- *Task card method.* The task card method involved a series of cards each presenting an activity with three differentiated difficulty levels colour coded 'easy' (green), 'medium' (amber) and 'hard' (red). Six task cards were created, each with supporting step-by-step guides for completing the tasks. This allowed learners to work at their own pace throughout the session, which they enjoyed.
- *Extending learning.* A further 16 'challenge cards' and six 'Advanced Challenges' were developed. These required participants to repeat procedures they had already practiced, extending their learning by encouraging them access to more complex features of the website, encouraging engagement with resources beyond the website. These allowed the more confident to sufficiently challenge themselves.
- *Stamp booklets.* All of the task cards and challenge cards were accompanied by stamp booklets in which each learner could stamp each difficulty level of a task as they completed it. This enabled participants to keep track of their progress.
- *Plenary activities.* We organised group activities such as 'Group chats' and quizzes to end sessions. These always required interaction via the website. This modelled posting, commenting and posing questions on the newsfeed, encouraging interaction and fun within the group.

Conclusions & Recommendations

- Attendance at more than one session of a digital skills training group increases user engagement.
- Meeting others before connecting with them digitally is crucial to the emergence of supportive interactions.
- Realisation of benefits is enhanced when the engagement process is well supported, and learners feel welcome and able to enjoy the social element.
- Attendance on a well-planned training course increases usage, thereby increasing confidence and making it more likely that those individuals will continue working with technology.

References

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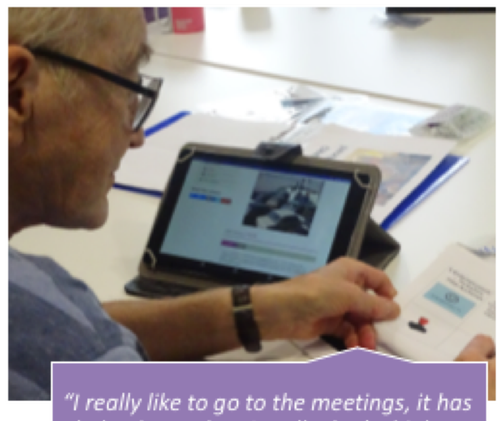
Participant Perspectives

"I really enjoy coming to the sessions and love all that I am learning."

What did you like most about the training?

"The achievement record, personal tuition and social interaction"



"I really like to go to the meetings, it has helped me a lot…I really don't think to me it could be improved."

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