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Poster Abstract

Needs and preferences of patients with a chronic condition towards using care technology to support self-management

Martine Huygens, Maastricht University, The Netherlands

Joan Vermeulen, Maastricht University, The Netherlands

Roland Friele, Nivel, The Netherlands

Onno van Schayck, Maastricht University, The Netherlands

Luc de Witte, Maastricht University, The Netherlands

Correspondence to: **Martine Huygens**, Maastricht University, The Netherlands, *E-mail:* m.huygens@maastrichtuniversity.nl

Abstract

Introduction: In the last years a large number of telecare and eHealth technologies have been developed which can be used in primary care to support patients with a chronic condition with self-management. However, these technologies are not yet frequently implemented and routinely used in the healthcare process. One of the reasons is that there is a mismatch between patients' needs and technological solutions. Before care technologies can be implemented on a large scale, patients' needs and preferences regarding the use of these services should be investigated.

Methods: Two focus group interviews were conducted: one with seven patients with Diabetes and one with four patients with COPD, who were recruited from two primary care centers in the Netherlands. During the focus group interviews patients' needs and preferences regarding self-management and care technology were discussed. Each focus group interview was audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. Two researchers (MH and JV) independently reviewed and coded the transcripts.

Results: The mean age of participants was 67 years (range 50 - 79) and seven were male. In general, Diabetes patients were positive about the use of care technology to support self-management. They indicated that they would use care technology when it is easy to use, easy to learn, provides real-time feedback based on self-measured data and when it improves communication between patients and healthcare professionals. COPD patients were less positive about technology to support self-management, and indicated that they did not perceive any benefits of monitoring health related data such as lung function. Both groups mentioned that they thought they would have no other option than using care technology in the near future, due to a decreasing number of healthcare professionals. Frequently mentioned barriers were costs when services would not be financed by health insurance companies, and reliability of services.

Discussion: Based on this research there are indications of differences between patient groups in their needs towards using care technology to support self-management. This can be caused by differences in treatment and frequency of contacts with care professionals. In addition, compared to other chronic conditions, for diabetes patients there are more information sources and educational disease management programs. Therefore, it could be that diabetes patients are already more aware of their own role in the management of their disease and consequently more open to use care technology to support this.

Conclusion: When implementing care technology to support self-management it should be taken into account that the technology should be easy to use and easy to learn, provide real-time feedback based on self-measured data and improve communication between patients and healthcare professionals.

Lessons learned: Both patient groups indicated that they were interested in care technology because they expected that they have to use it in the future and thus want to be well-prepared.

Limitations: A limitation of this study is the low number of participants. Due to three drop-outs one focus group interview consisted of four participants. In addition, up to now no data-saturation has been reached and therefore more focus group interviews will be conducted. Moreover, focus group interviews with patients with cardiovascular disease will be included in the study to investigate differences between three chronic conditions.

Suggestions for future research: In the current study the focus was on needs assessment of patients. However, patients are not the only end-users of care technology. It is recommended to investigate healthcare professionals' needs as well, and to implement care technologies that meet the needs of all end-users involved.

Keywords

ehealth; preferences; chronic diseases; self-management

PowerPoint presentation

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