
CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Participatory design methods in telemedicine

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Introduction:

Healthcare systems need a paradigm shift in the way health care services are provided in order to respond to the global trend with focus upon patient involvement within healthcare services in general. Thus, it becomes necessary to re-organise the way we offer healthcare services together with the patients. Participatory design is a research design and methodology that encourages the participation of users in the design process of technological solutions. Therefore, it has a potential for designing technologies that actually reflect the needs of the users, why it is relevant within telemedicine.

The aim of this presentation is to explain the process and theoretical framework of a PD project; give an example of a project including the applied methods, and to determine its application to telemedicine with focus on the rationale for genuine participation.

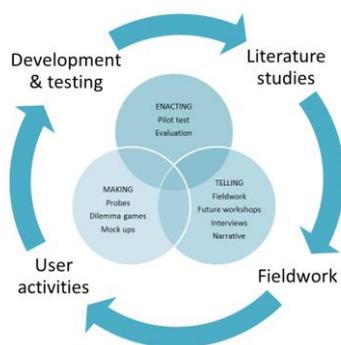
Theory:

Participation implies active involvement and collaboration of the intended users, which is seen as one of the most significant requirements of good design. Participation is where the user's role is changed from being *informants* to being accepted participants or co-designers in the design process, where they take active part in the exploration of needs and possibilities and in the design and prototyping as well as the organizational implementation.

Participation differs from other traditions such as user-centred design, contextual design and user-driven innovation. In Participatory Design participation is viewed as fundamental to understand and all stakeholders learn from each other as well as ensuring that the voices of the users are heard. This includes access to information and the power to influence decisions. It is a mutual learning process, and participation is viewed as a process that combines telling, making, enacting.

Methods:

Key activities of a Participatory Design project comprise methods such as fieldwork; literature reviewing; development and testing, and user activities as workshops. Methods that support telling, making, enacting. For instance telling activities as drivers for participation, where practitioners are given a chance to share their knowledge or the making of things can be a means of design participation, where tools allow the ability to create and describe future objects. As well as acting out and testing scenarios and technologies can increase participation as people explore how new designs could affect their practice.



Results and discussion:

The presentation will enhance both the identified strengths as participatory methods as well as challenges related to the use of PD including the time required to properly engage with participants; the selection of participants to ensure good representation of the user group.

Conclusions:

Participation is the core of Participatory Design as it offers participants a chance to be legitimate participants, which is supported by the use of the participatory methods and activities that support telling, making and enacting.

Telemedicine can gain from Participatory Design as Participatory Design offers methods that enhance genuine user participation and PD has proven successful results in the field of telemedicine.

Keywords: Participatory Design; methods; telemedicine; participation
