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Conference Abstract

Telecare and telehealth for informal carers: a research in 12 Member States on their benefits and policy role for the success

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Abstract

Introduction: Research acknowledges the relevance of social support and coping strategies to manage the pressure of care experienced by informal carers, where ICT-based services like telecare and telehealth can provide more effective and efficient support to individuals compared with traditional interventions. Nevertheless there is still little evidence of their benefits of these technological services for informal carers and on the factors associated with their successful development and transfer.

Aims and objectives: The aim of this study was to study how the technologies for independent living of the elderly affect the informal carers, and to identify the policy role to develop and scale these technological services in the European Union.

Methods: The methodology was to map the most relevant ICT-based initiatives existing in Europe to support informal carers of older people living in the community. We develop an impact assessment methodology that identified the most relevant factors of impact. We then carried out them an in-depth analysis of 5 selected good practices of telecare and telehealth in European countries to better understand the impact of such services. Moreover, we cross- analysed of 12 good practices of ICT based services for informal carers to identify the key success factors to develop such services.

Results: We found that telecare and telehealth provide relief, independence and peace of mind for informal carers. This allows carers to have more active social lives and more time for themselves. These tools can guarantee a decreased in demand by carers and care recipients for support and care services. The research also evidenced that key issues for the success of telecare and telehealth is to articulate a multi-level policy framework based mainly on policy leadership, combination of funding programmes, and support of intermediaries (in particular the third sector).

Conclusions: Telecare and telehealth are technologies for elderly people that can also benefit informal carers. Challenges still exist for their development, but a multi-level policy framework can help for the success.

Keywords:

informal care, independent living, policy role

Presentation available at: <http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/events/third-annual-international-congress-telehealth-and-telecare>