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Conference Abstract

Using technology to promote social inclusion in residential care

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Abstract

Introduction: Lack of social contact is a known risk factor for poor health outcomes, especially when an individual lives alone, is older and possibly in poor health since isolation can create the conditions for problems with older people's physical and mental health (Loneliness amongst older people and the impact of family connections WRVS 2012).

As more and more services are being delivered online, it is more important than ever that users have the skills and confidence to use technology. People living in communal environments may find it particularly problematic to access essential services and remain part of their communities.

Tunstall's myworld is a range of applications accessed via an easy-to-use touchscreen tablet, designed to promote independence, inclusion and wellbeing by providing a safe, simple means of connecting people with their care providers, friends, family and other services.

Aims: myworld has been designed to provide people who are unfamiliar with technology with a secure environment for communication, giving users with control over important aspects of their day-to-day lives. The system has been created to support older people with long-term health and care needs in particular, especially those residing in communal housing and assisted living settings.

Methods: The myworld solution has been developed as the result of a number of research initiatives and trial projects; Virtex & Sheffield University and DALLAS Technology Strategy Board project. Tunstall conducted product trials within a number of sheltered housing schemes to identify key user needs, using 12 individual applications pre-installed on a Toshiba AT400 touch screen tablet device.

With myworld, residents can:

- Manage appointments, such as care visits or property repairs
- Control meal orders and other services
- Get involved in social events and develop skills
- Send/receive messages/emails to keep in touch with family and friends

- Access a photo gallery and information, such as a calendar and news

The research that was conducted during the field trial found that residents had three main requirements: never feeling alone, richer communications and extended independence.

Results: The device's simplified user interface enabled residents with no prior technical experience to have easier access to their housing services and the wider community, reducing the feeling of being socially isolated and promoting independence.

myworld's address book ensures only messages from known contacts are received, giving users the reassurance they will only receive genuine messages from people known to them. The device also empowers users to easily organise and manage activities and appointments, helping to ensure attendance at planned events.

myworld's CarePortal is accessible via any web browser and gives site managers with a means of interacting and communicating with all residents on a one to one basis or broadcasting to all, saving time, providing a better residential experience and streamlining staff's work flow. Staff can make residents aware of forthcoming events, supporting engagement in social activities and greater inclusion.

Initial results from the pilot survey found that:

- 100% of residents envisaged using myworld every day
- 71% of residents feel more included and up to date as a result of having myworld

Keywords

social inclusion; digital access

PowerPoint presentation:

https://www.conftool.pro/digital-health-care-2014/index.php?page=adminPapersDetails&path=adminPapers&form_id=101
