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Conference abstract

A systematic review to examine the effect of telecare for people with social care needs on outcomes for their informal carers

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Abstract

Background and aims: A body of literature indicates that the informal carers (e.g. family, friends) of people with social and health care needs experience poorer quality of life, health and psychological wellbeing than their non-carer counterparts (e.g. Pinquart & Sorensen, 2003). It has been suggested that telecare interventions to enable a person with social care needs to remain at home may also positively impact on informal carer wellbeing (Yeandle, 2009), however, little is known about their effect in this domain. This review aimed to document and evaluate the evidence for the effect of telecare for a person with social care needs on psychological outcomes for their informal carer.

Method: A systematic review method was employed: six electronic databases were searched and experts in the field contacted to identify relevant published and unpublished evaluations. Seven hundred and forty-four unique studies were identified and assessed by two researchers for their fulfilment of the study inclusion criteria. Their quality was assessed using a standardised tool, and data extracted to describe the studies' characteristics and findings.

Results and conclusions: Seven evaluations fulfilled the inclusion criteria, of which two originated from peer-reviewed publications. Outcomes measured included carer burden, stress, satisfaction with telecare kit, worker productivity and morale, and relationships with the cared for person and others. All included studies suffered from methodological weaknesses, including non-randomised designs, small sample sizes and non-validated measures. The data indicated inconsistent evidence for an effect of telecare on informal carers' psychological wellbeing and perceptions of telecare kit, although there is tentative evidence to suggest a positive effect of telecare on carer stress and satisfaction with kit. Implications of the findings for future research and practice will be discussed.

Keywords

telecare, carers, review
