

Overcoming challenges of digital self-management in older adults with multimorbidity: the promise of social connectedness?



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Introduction

Digital self-management for older people holds promises for aging well. However, the adoption readiness remains limited due to barriers in e.g. digital literacy, health issues and support. Furthermore, older people with multimorbidity (PwMs) are at increased risk of experiencing social disconnectedness^{1,2}. This multi-stakeholder living lab study explores **the role of social connectedness in dealing with the challenges of digital self-management for older people with multimorbidity**.

Methodology

First phase: Semi-structured interviews and focus groups

38 older PwMs, 17 informal carers, 29 formal care workers and 41 healthcare professionals (HCPs).

Second phase: Co-creation sessions

13 sessions with PwMs and informal caregivers.

Data was collected in Belgium and Ireland as part of the ProACT project, which aims to develop a digital integrated health ecosystem to support self-management for older PwMs. The output was used to guide the development.

Results

First phase: Semi-structured interviews and focus groups

- Expected barriers in digital self-management and the lack of social connectedness.
- Loss or lack of social contacts was identified as a key factor in deterioration of health, wellbeing and self-management abilities by HCPs and formal carers.
- The social context was considered an important determinant of PwMs motivation for self-management across stakeholders.

Second phase: Co-creation sessions

- PwM wished to share self-management goals and progress with members of their Care Network and other participants.
- PwM and informal carers desired information on local events and/or groups.

References

¹ Czaja, S. J., Boot, W. R., Charness, N., A. Rogers, W., Sharit, J., Fisk, A. D., ... Nair, S. N. (2015). The personalized reminder information and social management system (PRISM) trial: Rationale, methods and baseline characteristics. *Contemporary Clinical Trials*, 40, 35-46.

² Waycott J., Vetere, F., Pedell, S., Morgans, A., Oza, e E. & Kulik, L. (2016). Not For Me: Older Adults Choosing Not to Participate in a Social Isolation Intervention. CHI '16 Proceedings of the 2016 CHI conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, 745-757.

Design

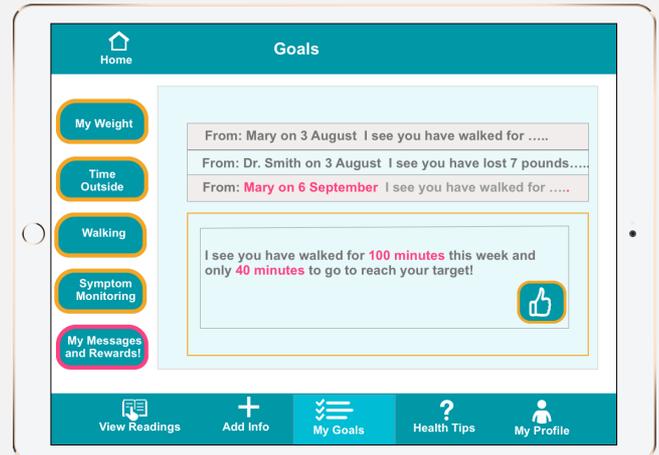


Fig. 1: Older people with multimorbidity can share self-management goals and progress, and receive messages of support.

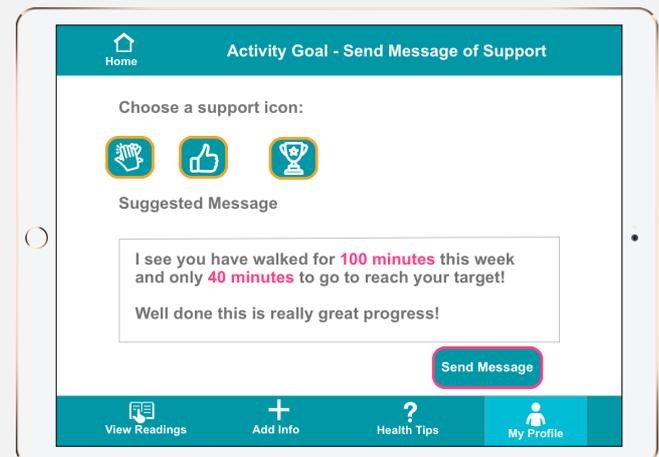


Fig. 2: Informal carers can send messages to the care receiver to support and motivate them in their self-management goals.

Conclusion and next steps

This study demonstrates the importance of supporting social connectedness in digital care solutions for older PwMs to help overcome the common challenges of digital self-management and increase adoption of digital self-management tools.

The proposed solutions will be tested and further iteratively developed in a 12-month Proof of Concept trial in Belgium and Ireland, starting in January 2018.

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