Elderly Care: The use of Technology and Web-based Learning

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DESCRIPTION

The rapid growth in the aging population drastically increases the need and demand for health-related information. Especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, technology has become significant in elderly care because it helps enhance the quality of life for elders and their carers. This article dives into the digital methods and interventions for delivering health-related information among the aging population.

Mobile health (mHealth)

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, older adults relied solely on healthcare providers or community centers to receive health-related services and information. They had to adopt mHealth, a medical and public health practice supported by mobile devices, such as smartphones, as access to these resources became limited [1]. Surprisingly, they presented a positive attitude toward this adoption and became more active in making informed decisions on their care. Their access to those resources has increased, as discovered in our previous study on elders' smartphone use habits and preferences for receiving health-related information.

Health education

Mobile health technology serves as a bridge that connects elders to a wide range of health information and promotes health education. It can advise on healthier lifestyle choices, such as dietary habits, sleep routines, exercise programs, and illness prevention and management. It can also assist elders in better managing their medications-intake by providing detailed medication information and careful instructions, such as potential adverse effects and combinations with other substances.

Web-based learning

Web-based learning is an educational method that is offered through the Internet. Health professionals use this method to deliver health-related information to a broader spectrum of older adults. For instance, our research team has developed a website that educates elders and their carers on pain management [2]. Older adults can better understand the meaning of pain and its effects, various pharmacological and non-pharmacological methods, and exercise practice to manage their pain situations. They gave positive feedback on using this web-based learning format. Many studies investigated elders' attitudes and intentions to use technological devices and reported positive correlations between older adults and technology acceptance [3].

Furthermore, the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer in Hong Kong developed the Community Initiatives & IT Services outreach program. Older adults can become more digitally literate and educated about mobile devices (Office of the Government Chief Information Officer, 2023). Governmental support is crucial to sustaining this type of learning within the older population [4].

Social connectivity

Elders often experience social isolation and disconnection from the community. Communication applications help facilitate better communication between health professionals and older adults. Our research team uses social media to deliver health-related information and remind our participants (elders and carers) to practice the non-pharmacological methods and exercises we taught them in our pain management program [5].

CONCLUSION

Elderly care is an ongoing topic that requires significant efforts from various fields. Technology is the key to addressing the growth in the silver population and its diverse challenges. As technology advances, we must utilize this advancement to create more innovative ways to care for older adults.

Participants reported their progress and encouraged each other to perform exercises. This healthcare delivery method is convenient as it overcomes physical barriers and enables virtual face-to-face interactions between our research team and participants

despite the locations. Thus, social connections and health awareness can be achieved. Technological developments (mHealth, web-based learning) help increase elders' sense of independence and confidence level. Thus, achieving active aging in place. By leveraging these technological advancements, we can empower older adults and their carers, improve the delivery of healthcare, and foster social connectivity, all of which will ultimately lead to an improvement in the quality of life for elders.

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