

Medical Students' Experiences in the Co-Development of Care Companion, a Personalised Web-based Resource to Support Informal Caring

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Background

There is a growing need to address the physical, psychological, and social challenges faced by informal carers in the UK. Care Companion is an innovative online platform, that provides reliable and accessible information for unpaid adult carers. Its website is populated by resources written by medical students under the direction of carers, who are continuously consulted to draw on their experiences of support and current challenges.

This study aims to describe the experiences of medical students in the development of Care Companion and the impact this had on their personal and professional development.

Materials & Methods

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with three medical students involved in the co-development of Care Companion. Interviews were anonymously recorded, transcribed and analysed using iterative thematic analysis to identify important themes.

Results

Overall, participants had a positive experience. The students acknowledge the perceived need and value of the resource and believed they each brought a unique insight to the project which resulted in a better product. Key benefits included: benefit to CV, improvement to clinical skills and financial compensation. The main drawback was time management due to clinical and academic commitments. Medical students felt encouraged to continue their work and pursue more research opportunities in the future.

Key Messages

This study suggests a positive role in for medical students in the co-development of a resource to help carers, with several personal and professional benefits.

