

PRESENTATION 5

The Experiences of Medical Students, Carers, and a Digital Design Company in the Co-Development of Care Companion, a Personalised Web-based Resource to Support Informal Caring

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Background

As the importance of informal carers in healthcare provision in the UK is increasingly recognised, there is a growing need to address the physical, psychological, and social challenges they can face. Care Companion is an innovative online platform, that aims to provide 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.

Methods

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with three key groups: the carer panel group, medical students and the digital development company. Interviews were analysed using iterative thematic analysis to identify important themes and issues relevant to the experience in co-developing Care Companion

Results

Participants had a range of computer literacy and all had previous caring experience. Motivations for involvement included the perceived value of the project, perceived need for carers to have easy access to online resources and potential personal benefit. Overall, participants had a positive experience. Perceived advantages to a collaborative approach included the unique insights from each group, the potential to improve the end-product, personal gratification and professional development. The disadvantages included differences in working style, a lack of clear product ownership, and logistical issues in coordinating meetings and managing demands with other responsibilities.

Key messages

This study suggests a positive role in a collaborative approach to the design of a personalised web-based resource for carers, in which key groups benefit personally and professionally.

