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Conference Abstract

Can eHealth help distance caregivers? A mixed-methods study exploring the use of ICT by carers at a distance in palliative care

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Abstract

Background: End of life care encompasses not only the patient, but also their relatives. Increasingly, people live apart from their close family and relatives. This brings challenges in providing the care and support people wish to provide to relatives who are near the end of life. While the needs of local caregivers in palliative care have received considerable attention, little is known about carers who live at a distance in this field. The irruption of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) offers new ways in which people can keep in touch, and provide care and support to their relatives, even if they do not live near or do not have easy access to them. At the same time, the rapid development of ICT has made possible an array of information about health issues on the Internet.

Aims: To describe the characteristics, needs and experiences of family carers at a distance in palliative care, and to explore their experiences and views on the use of ehealth to provide care at a distance.

Methods: A mixed-methods approach was used, with qualitative and quantitative strands. First, a postal survey was sent to around 200 relatives who provide meaningful support to a relative near the end of life. Twenty respondents were also interviewed over the telephone, in order to explore the views and experiences of these carers in depth.

Findings: This presentation will report on the preliminary findings of this PhD research project, both from the postal survey and the qualitative interviews.

Conclusions: It is envisaged that this PhD project will provide relevant information about how carers at a distance in palliative care use ehealth, and how beneficial this might be for their role as carers.

Keywords

palliative care; distance carers; ehealth; ICT
