

CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

HOW AUTOMATION TECHNOLOGY MAY CONTRIBUTE TO THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE ELDERLY CARE: AN INTEGRATED PERSONALISED CARE APPROACH

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Introduction

This paper studies the following research question: What is the relationship between the application of automation technology and the quality of life in the elderly care?

Theory/methods

In accordance with Carr & Higginson, the concept of the quality of life can change meaning depending on what people consider to be as essential (Carr & Higginson, 2001). The dimensions and domains demonstrate that quality of life goes beyond health: other factors such as having good social relations, being active and able to participate in socially and personally meaningful activities and having no functional limitations seem to be more important for older people (Gopalakrishnan & Blane, 2008).

More and more digitization is being applied worldwide. Smart technology such as robots could actually overcome the labour market problem in elderly care (Ford, 2015).

The research design of this study is qualitative and exploratory. The methodologies of this research are (multi-method) interviews, supported by observations and desk research (Merriam, 2009).

Results

Results indicate that the use of automation technology in the elderly care in the Netherlands is very limited and mainly used in night care and to improve the safety of the clients. This by far does not represent the current state of automation technology but is lagging behind. The conservative attitude of management of elderly care organisations, their short term focus and their limited financial resources to invest in more advanced automation technology are the main reasons for these findings.

Discussion

Where the literature writes about the great potential of technology, in practice this study found only a very modest implementation of automation technology in elderly care. This may be a risky paradox.

Conclusions

The types of home automation that affect the quality of life in elderly care are mainly focused on the well-being of the client, with the starting point being the creation of a stable daily rhythm in which the client experiences enough rest. Also the elderly care sector is looking at automation technology to support the freedom of movement of the elderly. But there seems to be a paradox between the conservative attitude and financial resources of the elderly care sector and the latest automation developments and opportunities.

Lessons learned

From a strategic perspective, it is important for nursing care organisations to critically study the shifts in the population pyramid and to brainstorm for a long-term solution. Also they need to develop a more open attitude towards the technical possibilities and promises of the automation technology for their sector.

Limitations

Because this research is explorative and limited to a small non-probability population sample, the results of this study cannot be generalised.

Suggestions for further research

It is recommended to conduct a similar qualitative study on a larger scale or a quantitative study on a larger (international) population based on the findings in this study.

References

Are available with the author