CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

"Me & My Family" phone application - Lessons learned in collaborative development

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Introduction: The use of mHealth tools in health care is increasing. However the understanding of their development and effective use is generally poor in the medical profession. Guidelines for effective impact evaluation of technology in Australia are scarce. There is also limited appreciation of the mechanisms by which technology enhances care co-ordination and health outcomes for the individual.

The creation of the Me & My Family phone application within the Healthy Homes and Neighbourhoods program (HHAN) has aimed to explore the development of a health and social care platform that will enable consumers to increase their health knowledge and health literacy in order to develop autonomous navigation of the health care system for themselves and their family. This is supported with evidence-based and sustainable health and social care information that has been developed within the program with a focus on health literacy and the utilisation of existing health materials from government and independent organisations. We describe the initial approach to development and the challenges experienced in this process.

Methods: A development plan was established prior to the commencement of the project. The development stages were divided into Exploration, Consultation, Design and Co-Collaboration, Consumer Testing, Modification and Re-test. Currently the development is in the Consumer Testing phase. The development plan outlined the aims of the application for use for both the health care worker (HCW) and consumer. Published literature, State and National guidelines were sought to inform the plan and the development process.

Results: Initial consumer and health care worker testing has shown that the application produced is user friendly and increases the confidence of the consumer in the reliability of the information they receive and ability to plan the health care for themselves and their family.

Discussions: mHealth applications encourage the individual to access and control their personal health information and health education. Integration of multiple health care resources and providers in one reliable platform allows the consumer to initiate health and social care needs.

The traditional trust in the health care provider has changed due to access to alternative sources of information that often conflicts with advice that is given. Utilising digital technology in an approachable manner allows this mistrust to be countered and the individual to develop better

autonomy with personal health and social care. A consistent message is likely to improve health care engagement and outcomes.

A collaborative development model with HCW, management, consumers and designers allows the incorporation of tools that improve consumer engagement and the ability of the HCW to understand unmet needs and deficiencies in the health care system.

Conclusions:

- A planned collaborative approach allows development of a product that will fulfil its aims.

- Consumers want technology that increases their health knowledge and control.

- Privacy of health care data is an important concern for both the health industry and consumer.

Lessons learned: A clear development plan and understanding of the consumer needs are integral to the production of a mHealth application.