

Skype Care

Skype in eldercare: experience of an intervention research

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Hypothesis

- **Loneliness, depression of old care recipients will end if they are able to learn to use Skype**

Sample

- ◆ **15 persons: Average age 80 + years**
- ◆ **Lonely and/or depressed: 2 suicide attempts**
- ◆ **Receiving mental and/or physical care - home care**
- ◆ **Limited outdoor mobility**
- ◆ **Problem for formal care and family members/carers**
- ◆ **No computer skills**
- ◆ **Received 15 computers and internet free of charge for 1 year**

Methodology

- ◆ Before starting, observation, talk
- ◆ During installation, observation, talk
- ◆ Permanent feedback by carers
- ◆ Intervention if necessary*
- ◆ **Involvement of 16-year-old volunteers** (3rd month) regular help
- ◆ social workers (4th month) case studies not knowing the previous physical, mental health
- ◆ Evaluation (researcher)

*E.g. sensitivity of the mouse was reduced, the icons were made larger (30% bigger 1024x768 instead of the default 880x600)

Motivation of older people

- **See/talk with family, grandchild:**
- **Strong desire to learn in spite of illness**
- **New goal (worth living)**
- **Daily occupation**

Role of young volunteers

Important

- Their presence: older people receive **permanent help**
- **Transfer** of their *up-to-date technical* knowledge
 - **technical catching up**
- **Continuous learning** is ensured by them
- Help to **eliminate prejudice against** older people
 - **Family**
 - “The family didn’t believe that it would be worth giving an old person a computer”* (head of the care centre)
 - **Society**
 - “I’d like to see what these old people are going to do with these computers: probably put a lace doyley on them, and a vase on that and then look at them”* (younger men)

Results

- Successful learning from the most ***basic level*** (switching the computer on and off)
- Learning Skype very ***quickly***
- Pace of learning ***differed***, but all reached a ***similar level*** by 4th month
- Desire for ***permanent learning***
- Internet: ***satisfaction*** of wide variety of desires and interests
- Problem: not to use Skype but **learn new functions** of internet

ICT Catching Up

- New customs: e.g. shopping on the net, watching soap operas online
- New words (Google, facebook, chat, surf, email, etc.)
- Old words with new content (virus, mouse, library, window)
- Disappearance of fear (mouse will eat the food, virus will cause sickness and vaccination is needed)
- Internet-based positive addiction, 2-4 hours
- **Need for helpers** to learn, to catch up!!

New intergenerational relationship

With: young volunteers, grandchildren

- They transfer the most up-to date ICT knowledge
- Possible: to overcome the intergenerational gap
 - *“I’ll have one (computer), just like my grandchild.”.... “ We are much closer now.”*

Why is it possible?

- The young do what they like to do: internet, Skype

“ We taught Aunt K. to use the internet. She learnt to use the mouse, to visit portals, create an email account. I have a lot of other plans for her, I would like to continue intensive voluntary work with Aunt K.”

- Changed role: instead of pupils they become teachers: feeling like adults

- They learn empathy!

- *Number of volunteers doubles!*

Changing family relationship

- Grandchildren are indirectly involved in eldercare, they relieve burden of adult family carer
 - “We are on Skype **every day** with our **grandchildren too**, sometimes I practically fall asleep at the PC because they could go on talking forever while I am tired, but I don't mind.”
 - “I can see my **grandchildren all the time** and they can see me.”

Change of Social Network by Skype

Phase 1. intention to talk only to family

- *Maintain or strengthen their relationship*

Phase 2: want to find a friend, acquaintance

- *Keep old relationship alive*

Phase 3: want to find other older people

- *Widen social network*

- **Increasing personal network! Not decreasing.**

Messages

Older people

- ✓ Positive **mental change** by 4th month!!
 - “Uncle A. seemed to be a **well-balanced, confident, communicative, optimistic** person with **good empathy.**” (social work student not knowing that he was depressed and received mental care)*
- ✓ **End of loneliness, no more suicide attempts**
- ✓ **New goal**
- ✓ **More colourful daily activity**
- ✓ **3-5 hours internet use - positive addiction**
- ✓ **Older people were ready to pay for internet use**
- ✓ **Cheap**

Messages

- **Family carer/s: time- and cost-saving new care method (e.g. no travel to check, release of stress family)**
- *“ The family didn’t believe that it would be worth giving an old person a computer.”* (head of the care centre)
- **Decision-makers: local and macro level**
 - less burden for the institutions
 - cost saving
 - possible to involve younger generations in eldercare
- **Market: new possibility selling computers, internet**
- **Transferable**

Near future

- Intention of a local government (county seat) to include Skype in home care
- 2 other local governments are interested (in Budapest)
- New action research under development
 - Goal: to explore how to apply the finding in poorer rural areas among less educated older people