Digital support services beneficial for family carers in rural areas.

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The rural context

- Long distances to healthcare services
- Fewer available services
- Depopulation
- Demographic development
  - Increasing number of older people
  - Large proportion of older people
- Lack of health-care professionals
- Many chronically ill cared for at home by spouse
Family caregiving

(European perspective)

• 80% of care to people over 65 provided by family carers
• Without family carers society cannot meet future care demand
• Physical & mental health problems
• Isolation
• Deliver care with very little training and minimal support.
There is urgent need for new ways to support rural carers!

Can digital support be as good as traditional support?

Or at least good enough?
A study with comparative design

- Spouse carers > 65 yrs (n=95)
- Intervention group – digital carer support
- Control group – traditional carer support
- Long term follow up after 1.5 years
- Qualitative and quantitative measures
Results

• All carers found their support beneficial

• Digital group significantly more satisfied with benefits of support (p<0.002)

• For digital group: impact on whole life situation

Instrument: Carer effectiveness scale CES, (Archbold, Stewart and Miller, 1995)
## Comparison

### FLEXIBILITY AND AVAILABILITY ESSENTIAL FOR MEETING CARERS NEEDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Digital group</strong></th>
<th><strong>Traditional group</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Unmet needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choosing suitable information</td>
<td>Wrong sort of support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deciding the time of support</td>
<td>Limited availability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matching support activities with current needs</td>
<td>Insufficient support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessible at odd hours</td>
<td>Organisations needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On demand</td>
<td>outrank carer’s needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Benefits from digital support

- Regaining a position in society
- Pride & Self esteem,
- Digital inclusion
- More contact with grandchildren
- More fun in my life
- Improved Quality of Life
- Higher carer competence

Association of Local Authorities
Västernorrland County
Research and Development Unit
How often and for what purpose did they use the digital support service?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Several times a week</th>
<th>A few times a month</th>
<th>Less than once a month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet (n = 39)</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail (n = 29)</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webcam with peers (n = 37)</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Info and education programs (n = 33)</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games (n = 33)</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webcam with support nurses (n = 38)</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The role of professionals change when working with digital services

- Different perceptions of use
- Family carers became more independent and needed less help from professionals
- Professionals involvement essential for the positive outcome
- New roles – new values
Digital support service -  
New roles & new values

From
Help provider

Helping carers by doing things for them

I’ve done a good job = many contacts with clients

To
Coach

Helping carers by guiding them to do themselves

I’ve done a good job = few contacts with clients

Same number of staff can support more carers
Conclusions

• Digital support can be as good as, or even better than, traditional support in rural areas.

• Increased independence and satisfaction among carers who use digital support services.

• Digital services enables staff to serve more clients

• Digital support changes the role of professionals
Norrlandicus Care Lab – Novel Test Method for Aging Society Innovations

- Living Lab test environments
- Developed test and evaluation method
- Test performed by end users: the elderly, their family & staff
- Evaluation of innovation
  - user perspectives
  - usability
  - effectiveness
  - satisfaction
  - well being

Funding ended
Regional e-health policy
## Tested innovations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Living Lab test environment</th>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Home care</td>
<td>Sensor technology bed protection sheet</td>
<td>Early discovery of urine leakage, avoid laying in wet bed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Dementia Nursing Home</td>
<td>Disposable sensor wear to electronically track resident voiding patterns in real-time</td>
<td>72-hour assessment for optimizing incontinence care</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thank You!

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Publications


Blusi, M (2014) E-health and Information- and Communication Technology (ICT) as support systems for older family caregivers in rural areas. Doctoral Thesis no 203, Department of Nursing Sciences, Sundsvall; Mid Sweden University. ISBN 978-91-87557-87-3
