L. DAMODARAN, C.W. OLPHERT. Assisted living technologies: Users' needs and challenges for successful uptake. Gerontechnology 2010;9(2):208; doi:10.4017/gt.2010.09.02.249.00 **Purpose** Well documented changes in demographics forecast a significant increase in the population of those over 65, who will have an increasing need for support as they age. Developments in information and communications technology (ICT) have led to a proliferation of new products, systems and services aimed at providing assistance with aspects of daily living. Yet, there is consistent evidence, gathered over many years, to show that if such technologies do not meet the needs of the intended users they are likely to be, at best, only partially effective and at worst, completely abandoned. An investigation of users' needs relating to assisted living technologies (ALTs) has been conducted as part of a research study commissioned by Ofcom into how ALTs might help older and disabled people to live longer and more independent lives at home. This paper reports the findings and conclusions from the review of the requirements of older people and their carers for ALTs. **Method** Data were collected from three sources: a search of the literature (75+ publications), interviews with 12 people who work directly with older people and/or their informal carers, and a workshop involving a subset of these interviewees to evaluate a scenario of future developments in ALTs. **Results & Discussion** From the data, the key needs expressed by older people are: to live independently for as long as possible; to be able to care for themselves and their homes; to feel safe and secure; to enjoy a fulfilling life; and to enjoy life outside the home, as far as any impairments they have will allow. The findings suggest that users and their informal carers are generally positive about ALTs, which can help them to meet many of these needs. Although there are some differences in perceptions and priorities between older people and their carers, the features that attract them to ALTs include: support for living independently, lessening the burden on carers, help with taking active control of one's own health, improved social and leisure opportunities (especially for the housebound), reduced need for hospital visits, emergencies etc., and increased reassurance and security. However, a number of concerns and potential barriers were also evident. A main area of concern was lack of choice and control, alongside concerns about privacy and security of the data collected by the technologies. Other concerns included: costs (actual or perceived); the possibility of reduced social interaction through increased use of ALTs, concerns about stigmatization – being seen to need support (particularly related to the 'medical' appearance of many devices), the availability of adequate support, and concerns about having appropriate ICT skills/and confidence to use the technologies effectively. Such concerns are likely to significantly limit take-up if they are not addressed. Based on the findings, a set of nine challenges are identified for suppliers of ALTs, together with recommendations for how these challenges may be overcome.
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