

ORAL SESSION 5: ROBOTICS

Experiences from implementation and long-term use of 'Zora' robot in elderly care services

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Purpose The use of care robots is still a new approach in elderly care services, but the interest towards them is growing (Melkas et al., 2020; Ott, 2012; Compagna & Kohlbacher, 2015). In this study, we report the experiences gained both from the implementation phase and the long-term use of the Zora robot in elderly care services in Finland. Zora is a 57 cm-tall humanoid robot that can be used for rehabilitation and recreation. **Method** The data were collected in a case study, conducted in two phases: 1) the implementation phase in two round-the-clock service care homes and a geriatric rehabilitation hospital in December 2015 – April 2016, and 2) a follow-up phase after three years of Zora use. The first dataset consists of 49 semi-structured interviews (management, care personnel, elderly clients) and observation of 27 sessions where the robot was used. The second dataset consists of 7 follow-up interviews of the managers and key care personnel in the same care units, conducted in spring 2019. **Results and Discussion** The robot was mainly welcomed positively among the elderly clients, who were open-minded and engaged. The robot stimulated exercising and led to reminiscing and interaction. Reactions of the care personnel varied. For some, it brought new perspectives to care work, but there was also prejudice and fear among others, especially in the beginning. As to long-term experiences, the main result is that expectations were greater than benefits: even though the robot was still experienced as benefitting the clients, the device had not been truly embedded in the daily services of the units. Reasons for this were mainly related to organisational issues, for example, lack of information flow and collaboration between “silos” in the renewing organisation, and lack of responsible persons to support technology use. There were also some challenges related to the technology itself, like its usability. The results highlight the importance of consolidating technologies and organisational processes. A community of truly competent users as well as guidelines and orientation models for robot use are needed.

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Figure 1. Zora robot in an exercise session