

ORAL SESSION 3: PERSONAL MOBILITY

A mobile app for unlicensed support personnel who care for older adults with dementia

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Purpose In Alberta, Canada, healthcare aides (HCAs) are unlicensed support personnel who comprise the second largest workforce, next to nurses, caring for seniors. Currently, we have a shortage of 5000 HCAs. As the number of older adults increase, age-related health conditions such as dementia also rise. It is challenging to meet the needs of Albertans living with dementia, particularly those who are living alone, or with family carers with limited capacity. These conditions put persons with dementia at risk, limit their autonomy, and restrict their ability to remain in their communities. In a study in 2012 we suggested that by using a multi-featured mobile application to support workflow of health care aides, we can address the recruitment, retention, and recognition of HCAs. This would result in improved health outcomes of Albertans living with dementia as their needs would be better met while they age in place. The objectives of this study are to: (1) Customize a multi-featured mobile application to be used by HCAs, family carers, and HCA students who provide care to persons living with dementia, and (2) Evaluate the usability of the technology platform, impact on HCA workflow, and perceived health outcomes for Albertans living with dementia. **Methods** We are recruiting 60 HCAs from three home care agencies. Participants use the mobile app on tablets for 2 months. All participants complete an initial questionnaire and an exit questionnaire before and after they used the mobile app. We also collect data through focus groups after participants used the mobile platform. **Results & Discussion** Our mobile app for health care aides offered a digital platform that helped streamline their workflow. HCAs welcome an opportunity to incorporate mobile technologies to address issues in their workflow, including communication, documentation, scheduling, and safety. Family caregivers feel there is a better integration of care when using the digital platform. There is a growing pull from the health care system and clients about use of information communication technologies to support the workflow care provided to older adults living with dementia. HCAs who are our frontline service providers will finally be able to truly serve as “extra eyes” with their clients and share their observations with clients’ health care team members. Ultimately, seniors living with dementia, and their family carers can experience better integrated care. This service sector does not have remote access to electronic health records and platforms created for licensed health professionals. Therefore, this technology solution enhances the quality of care for people living with dementia by addressing the needs of the healthcare aides’ workforce.

Keywords: older adults, dementia, healthcare aide, mobile apps

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