

*T. Kangastupa, M. Hedberg, K. Mäkelä. A new tool for selecting appropriate home care devices for elderly persons suffering from dementia. Gerontechnology 2008; 7(2):136.* Finland has a total population of some 5,3 million people, of which approximately 113 000 are elderly persons suffering from various stages of dementia<sup>1</sup>. Demented persons have a greater risk than others to end up in long term institutional care<sup>2</sup>. It is more beneficial for the national health care system and the elderly people themselves to aim for supporting home care instead of expensive institutional care. One way to support home care is to obtain the maximum benefits of various home care support technologies and alarm systems. There are a number of devices and technologies commercially available, but so far there have been no specific rules or methods for choosing the most appropriate technologies based on individual needs of the elderly suffering from dementia. **Methods** We developed a consultation tool for social welfare and health care professionals for defining the need of devices and home care services of elderly people, as well as individuals suffering from debilitated abilities<sup>3</sup>. The evaluation tool includes a database of commercially available home care aids and devices in Finland. Each device is given a 'Principal function' and 'Devices characteristics' profile that describe the technology in question. For adding new devices to the database, there are two evaluations of devices which estimate their necessity and usability. The questions are similar to ones used in patient functional rating scales currently in clinical use<sup>4</sup>. For supporting the final selection, a list of technical and functional characteristics is also saved for each device. Since the system is based on a structured format, additions to the database are possible. **Results and discussion** The tool recommends devices from the database corresponding to the patient's individual needs and abilities. The appropriate technology is recommended after evaluation of the potential user needs, which is done with a structured questionnaire consisting of 15 questions. These questions were chosen, as far as possible, from existing and reliable functional rating scales. The tool enables the health care professionals to choose the correct devices for the patients and thus decreases the number of house calls done by experts only to special occasions. It is also expected that the tool will hasten and intensify the implementation of home care equipment and devices.

## References

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