Web-based support in long-term illness – a person-centred care approach

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Introduction

The poster outlines a research project that aims to develop and evaluate a person-centred model of web-based learning and support for people with long-term illness. Departing from the widespread use of the internet in modern society and the emerging use of web interventions in healthcare, the multi-case project captures persons’ needs and expectations in order to develop highly usable web resources. To support the underlying idea to move beyond the illness, we approach the development of web support from the perspective of the emergent area of person-centred care (PCC).

Materials and Methods

The research design uses a meta-analytical approach through its focus on synthesizing experiences from four Swedish regional and national studies/cases of design and use of web-based support in long-term illness. The cases include children (bladder dysfunction and urogenital malformation), young adults (living close to persons with mental illness), and two different cases of adults (women with breast cancer and childbearing women with type 1 diabetes). All of the cases are ongoing, though in different stages of design, implementation, and analysis.

An inductive approach characterizes the analysis of the results of the cases. By means of a step-wise analysis a shared knowledge and understanding of each separate case is created followed by the development of central categories (such as types of needs and expectations, types of theories, conceptual framework, etc).

Results

To allow valid comparisons between the four cases we explore and problematize them in relation to four main aspects: 1) The use of people’s experiences and needs; 2) The role of use of theories in the design of person-centred web-based supports; 3) The evaluation of the effects of health outcomes for the informants involved and 4) The development of a generic person-centred model for learning and social support for people with long-term illness and their significant others.

Discussion

Person-centred web-based support is a new area and no available study focus on how web-based interventions can contribute to the further development of PCC. In the four cases within this project the evaluation model is characterized by evaluation of web support in real settings, and data will be analysed using both within-case and across-case statistical analyses. Therefore, our multiple-case method, in which overlapping results from different contexts will provide comprehensive experiences, will contribute to the design of a more generally applicable, individually modifiable model. However, the multiple case method is also a challenge of validity, as the use of different case experiences and environments, involves an endeavour to understand what types of experiences are actually being captured in the process of developing a web-based support and what this means in relation to PCC. In summary, the main intention of the project outlined here is to contribute with both a synthesis of results on meta-level from four cases and a substantial contribution to the field person centred care.

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References