

The potential of touch-screen computer technology in facilitating social and leisure activities for people living with dementia

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One of the most frequently identified unmet needs for the person with dementia is something enjoyable to do during the day (Wherton & Monk, 2008). It is increasingly suggested that enabling technologies may contribute by positively influencing the dementia experience (Topo, 2008). Researchers have recognised the potential of developing technologies that assist people living with dementia to navigate their day successfully. Few however, have recognised the potential of using existing technologies as an intervention to support social interactions and leisure activities. This explorative study is focussed on the potential of touch screen computer technology as a facilitator of enjoyable activity thus enhancing wellbeing for people living with dementia. Participants in the moderate to later stages of the condition attending a day centre consented to take part in sessions using touch screen technology. Wednesday group involved four members, each being provided with their own touch screen. Friday group involved ten members, each touch screen being shared between two or three participants.

This multidisciplinary project takes an Ethnomethodological approach (Garfinkel, 1984) with data collection methods by means of video-based participant observations. The method of data analysis is interactional multimodal analysis (Norris, 2004) enabling both the audible and visual aspects of interaction to be explored. Deeper understanding of the data has been gained by drawing on theoretical perspectives from sociology, psychology and science and technology studies. The main findings indicate that touch-screen computer technology can facilitate social interaction through participation in leisure activities. However, differences exist in the nature of the interactions depending on whether



Figure 1: Friday group



Figure 2: Wednesday group

participants' are interacting solely with the technology or sharing a device within a small group. These findings will inform a subsequent study pertaining to the earlier stages of the condition.

References

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