

Title:

Engaging Students in Research: Decreasing Social Isolation in the Independent Living Senior Through Technology

Dona Molyneaux, PhD, MSN, BSN

Frances M Maguire School of Nursing and Health Professions, Gwynedd Mercy University, Gwynedd Valley, PA, USA

Session Title:

Scientific Posters Session 1

Keywords:

independent living elders, social isolation and student research

References:

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Winstead, V., Anderson, W.A., Yost, E.A., Cotten, S.R., Warr, A., & Berkowsky, R.W. (2013). You can teach an old dog new tricks: a qualitative analysis of how residents of senior living communities may use the web to overcome spatial and social barriers. *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 32(5), 540-560. doi:10.1177/0267323113499113

Abstract Summary:

This session will discuss a pilot research study conducted to determine if technology could decrease social isolation in independent living seniors. Seniors skyped with graduate nursing students for 7 months. Benefits and Barriers are identified for both seniors and nursing students.

Learning Activity:

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	EXPANDED CONTENT OUTLINE
Identify the problem of social isolation in the independent living seniors	Review of the background and review of the literature. Social isolation is a significant problem for the elderly. Can lead to depression and lack of self- care

Understand the principles of the grant and selection of the project	Review the grant and project proposal VNA grant Telkin Computer proposal and involvement
Evaluate the barriers and benefits experienced by the seniors	Review the findings of the study for seniors. Barriers: time, technology, connection, support; Benefits: Increased connectivity with families, friends and formed friendships with students
Evaluate the barriers and benefits for the nursing students	Barriers for students: busy schedule; trouble connecting; study fatigue Benefits: formed friendships; loved research
Identify further potential for study	Limitations: select socially isolated elders Bigger sample size

Abstract Text:

Purpose: The purpose of this pilot study was to determine if skyping on a senior friendly Telkin computer with graduate nursing students would decrease social isolation in the independent living senior.

Methods: A \$10,000 Grant was obtained by the VNA with Telkin Computer Company. A Pilot study was conducted with 12 seniors and 11 graduate nursing students for a period of 7 months. Students skyped the senior twice a week, Students used their own personal computers and participants were provided with a Telkin senior computer. Each senior received a Telkin Senior computer for their use through the grant period. The Telkin company set up the computer at the senior's residence and provided technological assistance during the study. Graduate nursing students journaled their interactions with the participants and also used their nursing assessment skills to determine if there was a change in the senior that would require an intervention. Participants were interviewed at a focus session at the end of the pilot to determine their perspective.

Results: Seniors increased their technology skills through the use of the computers as evidenced by game playing, using email and purchasing the computer at the end of the study. Seniors began to skype other family and friends during and following the study demonstrating increased social interaction. Seniors and students formed bonds and accountability. Students journals were analyzed and themes identified. Several of the participants did not meet the criteria of social isolation, yet expressed positive feedback regarding interacting with students. Graduate students also benefited by establishing bonds with the seniors and experiencing a research study in action. A gathering at the end of the study was held for the students to meet their assigned seniors.

Conclusion: Skyping is one method that can be used to decrease social isolation for socially isolated seniors. Having increased regular contact with students was seen as beneficial. Further research to decrease social isolation in isolated elders is warranted. Quantifying social isolation may be helpful.