



Using Technology to Decrease Social isolation and Loneliness in Independently Living Seniors: A Pilot Program

Gwynedd Mercy University

Dona Molyneaux RN, PhD, CNE and John Whitman, Executive Director
The TRECS (Targeting Revolutionary Elder care Solutions) Institute

Introduction

- 46 Million elderly in the U.S. as of 2016 and will double by 2060
- Social isolation and loneliness have a profound negative effect on physical and mental health in older adults.
- Health risk factors include: Poor perceived health, depression, disability, cognitive decline, suicide, drug abuse, greater usage of social services, high number of chronic illnesses, and compromised mental health.
- Information and communication Technologies are useful tool to decrease social isolation and loneliness in elderly population

Objective

To investigate the ability of technology to decrease social isolation and loneliness in independent living seniors

Study Design

Descriptive Pilot study, funded by the North Penn Visiting Nurses Association

Sample: Convenience sample of 10 self selected independent living seniors in SE Pa



Methods

Telkin computers and internet access were provided to 10 independent living seniors for the study

Telkin is a simple and easy to use family computer that combines video chat, photo sharing, email and many more popular features designed for elders with a touchscreen device.

Methods

- Nursing students enrolled in a graduate research course were responsible to skype and communicate participants a minimum of 2 times/week from September 2015- April 2016
- Students were required to keep a journal of each visit. Journals were analyzed and coded for themes.



Findings

Factors that limited Skype use

Health Limitations: Fatigue; health issues; pain

Technical Issues :Internet disconnection; poor connections; user error

Social Issues: Lack of Skype contacts; socially engaged

Personal Issues : Busy; disinterested

Factors that increased skype use:

Personal : Commitment, perceived benefit, motivation

Social : Comradery; identified students as friend/family

Relationship with student : perception of engagement, caring, presence, encouragement, support

Other findings:

Subjects reported a mean loneliness mean loneliness score of 3 and social isolation score of 5 out of 10

Subjects looked forward and depended on contact with students

Subjects confided in students personal aspects of their life and were interested in details of students lives

Subjects reported disappointment when student did not call

Discussion

The findings of this study:

- Telkin computers and skype provided a way for elders to connect with the outside world and nursing personnel.
- Participants and Students established bonds which continue today!
- Elders increased skype communication with other family and friends
- Elders reported Sense of belonging; “Know you’re connected” and Reliable friendship

Limitations:

- Not all participants were homebound- suggest repeat study with homebound elders

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Contact Information

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