



NIHR | Applied Research Collaboration
East of England

Stevenage Dementia
Involvement Group

Virtual wards: using
technology to
monitor conditions
at home

October 2022



Introduction

Stevenage Dementia Involvement Group provides opportunities for people with experience of dementia to have influence on research and the planning of new services. In each session the group will discuss a particular topic relating to living with dementia or health and social care services in Stevenage.

Stevenage Dementia Involvement Group met face-to-face on 20th October 2022.

In attendance were seven people with experience of living with or caring for somebody with dementia.

Attending the group were guest researchers Chloe Bennett (University of Hertfordshire) and Kevin Minier (East of England Citizen Senate).

The topic of discussion was **virtual wards and monitoring your health at home away from hospital.**



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IMAGE | Members of the Stevenage Dementia Involvement Group on 20/10/2022

What happened?

Chloe and Kevin introduced the study. They spoke about a trial happening in two areas of England where people with certain conditions (e.g. asthma) were sent home from hospital early with a "virtual ward" technology kit. This kit included:

- Blood pressure monitor
- Oximeter
- Thermometer
- Smart phone (to submit the readings)



IMAGE A | Blood Pressure Monitor



IMAGE B | Oximeter



IMAGE C | Thermometer



IMAGE D | Smart phone



Question: Have you used technology like this before?

The group said:

- Most had used this equipment before.
- They liked the idea, but technology can be scary for some people if they aren't used to it.
- One group member mentioned having high blood pressure 40 years ago and given the options of staying in hospital or monitoring their own blood pressure at home. They chose to do their blood pressure at home and found it straightforward and somehow linked back to the hospital.
- Most said using the equipment wouldn't be a problem but entering the results into the smart phone would be more difficult.

What to consider when offering this technology to people living with dementia

The group said:

- People living with dementia might be less anxious and more calm being monitored at home.
- Carers would be more reassured if their loved one was at home. A person staying in hospital could be a rest for a carer but they would still be at home worrying.
- Carers have a better understanding of their family member than staff.

The group also pointed out:

- Fluctuations in ability should be considered- one day someone can do it, another day they might not be able to
- Consider hearing, talking over the phone can be difficult for some people.
- Sometimes people living with dementia can't tell you what's wrong and seeing someone helps.



Question: Should people living with dementia be offered this technology?

Chloe and Kevin mentioned that currently some organisations do not offer this technology to people living with dementia. They asked the group what they thought about this?

The group said:

- Some group members said that people living with dementia should be given this technology if they have a carer to help or are at an early stage of their dementia.
- Some group members said they wouldn't give something like this to a person living with dementia.
- Decisions should be made on an individual basis with ongoing assessment of someone's condition.



Other thoughts

- It's easier to do this than travel into the hospital every day.
- People prefer to be at home and feel better at home.
- When a doctor takes your blood pressure it can go up so this might alleviate that.
- Sometimes when people show you how to do something that they know how to do you can't keep up.
- Messages need to be consistent from NHS.
- Doccla instruction sheet seems simple.
- Confirmation of receiving the reading and it being read would be reassuring.
- Prompt on the Doccla phone to do the readings would be useful at first, for example a set alarm.
- The phone number of the Doccla phone would be useful so you could call it if you lost it.

Next steps

This group provided people with experience of living with dementia the opportunity to share their opinions and experiences about remote monitoring devices. Members of the group have been invited to be involved with the project if they would like to.

For the researchers the session provided the opportunity to hear people's experiences and to get the views and opinions on potential users of this technology.

This summary report has been read and approved by the group members who attended.

This group is organised by researchers from the University of Hertfordshire as part of the National Institute of Health Research Applied Research Collaboration (ARC) East of England. For more information, or if you are interested in joining or visiting the group, please contact Nicole Jones (nicole.jones@cpft.nhs.uk) or visit our website <https://arc-oe.nihr.ac.uk/stevenage-dementia-involvement-group> (or use the QR code below)



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