Robots in Care for Older People: Opinions of Potential End-Users

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ENRICHME:
Enabling Robot and assisted living environment for Independent Care and Health Monitoring of the Elderly (Horizon 2020, No: 643691C)
CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE

We have no potential conflict of interest to report
The new system solutions to be created must also be cost effective. Such solutions may be based on the use of robots which would assist older adults living in the community.
AIM of the project:

To test technologies for supporting older people with MCI in their living environment for a longer time

STAGES:

1. To define the users’ abilities, preferences and needs related to robots involved in the care for older people
2. To create the prototype of the robot based on the defined requirements
3. To test the robot in AAL laboratories
4. To validate the robot in the older persons’ housing facilities / users’ homes
METHOD
The focus group interview (FG)

recommended in all cases where it is necessary to understand the behaviour of participants and their motivations, and the ways in which their opinions are formed (grounded theory approach)

65+ persons
Informal caregivers
Formal caregivers

Italy:
1 FG: 3 subjects attending a day centre & 2 health operators

Greece:
1 FG: 5 older females (volunteers)

Poland:
4 FG - 6 persons participating in each of them:
   2 FG of 65+ individuals
   2 FG of caregivers (1 of formal and 1 of informal caregivers)
Robot - KOMPAI
Results

Focus group discussions identified six areas of interest:

1. Overall attitudes towards the robot

In general:

expectation towards the robot - positive
Participants 65+:

"on some days I would need the robot more, on others less", but "one would feel more confident with a device like that"

the robot could be a "friend because one would not feel lonely at home, there would be someone there (...), someone to talk to"

"it would be possible to talk politics? (...) But if the robot had different political views?"

"I could have an opponent. The discussion would be better then."
2. Ethical issues

INDEPENDENCE ISSUE

“I wonder whether if it helped with things that I can do but it just takes me longer to do, it would actually mean that I would stop using skills I have. For example, I lose my glasses but I eventually remember where they are. With the robot it would be too tempting to ask where they are, would be quicker. But then I would not be using my own brain,”

“It should let them remember on their own and then remind if it sees that they have forgotten.”
2. Ethical issues

“The robot should perform the elderly person’s commands, but if the state of health of the owner deteriorates it should inform a caregiver even if the elderly person does not want it to do this.”

„I think that there should be some well-defined situations where the robot would not perform an order or would behave differently than desired by the owner because it has concluded that something very bad is happening to the owner, that his sanity could be limited and it is necessary to call a doctor instead of opening a window (…) there could be preconditions enabling the robot to modify its behaviour and refuse to do exactly as the owner wants it to do. „
"I think that if such robot turned out to be very useful then its loss would be felt very strongly."

"The robot may be perceived ... as a form of control."

"Does this robot discover all my secrets?"

"it is ok that the robot controls me and tells me to avoid eating too much...but it must not tell anybody else. It should not become a gossiper or a spy"

"there is a risk of isolation: I keep playing with my "toy" and I get isolated from the real world (like what happens with the internet)"

"the fear and the risk is that when the relatives delegate everything to the robot and take care even less of their elders, this could increase the older person’s state of depression and loneliness. Technology does not have to be a substitute for human relationships."
Results

Areas of interest:
3. The scope of the robot’s functions,
4. Safety issues,
5. Doubts about the preparedness of older persons for the robot,
Areas of interest:

6. **Issues related to the introduction of robots into the lives of the older persons**

- Gradual process of preparation for using a robot, initially with considerable involvement of professional personnel/younger person.
- Only after gaining confidence in robot’s operation the involvement of the caregiver should diminish, but in a flexible way, depending on the degree of confidence gained by the older person.
  - *It seems to me that the older people are slightly afraid, even in advance, of various novelties, and in particular, new technologies.* (53 years old male)
  - *At the beginning there would have to be another person there because I would be afraid to remain with it alone,* (73 years old female) *to learn how to live together.* (78 years old female)
  - *Initially, somebody from the family or a younger person who understands all of this would have to come for two-three hours.* (73 years old female)
Conclusions

• The use of robots by community-dwelling older person was generally accepted by all participating groups, especially if the robots’ introduction is preceded by competent pre-training.

• Ethical issues should be taken into account.
Thank you!
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