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Planning for patient involvement in eHealth research: identifying barriers and facilitators

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Background

eHealth interventions are recognized to have the potential to promote patient engagement and enhance health care services. However, they may differ in terms of quality and effectiveness. Growing evidence suggests that involving patients in the development process may elicit and integrate patient preference, resulting in increased relevancy and adoption of the eHealth intervention.

Project aim

The aims of the project are

- a) to develop a plan for patient involvement in development and testing of an eHealth intervention for symptom assessment and electronic communication and
- b) to identify barriers and facilitators for patient involvement in the research study to enhance relevance and adoption of the intervention.

Project methods

The Guideline for Reporting Involvement of Patients and the Public (GRIPP2) was used to prospectively plan patient study involvement. In addition, a predefined taxonomy was used to identify barriers perceived by the involved researchers and an experienced patient co-researcher. The patient co-researcher participated in the planning process, advising and refining the plan according to the available resources in the study.

Project results

A detailed plan was evolved, with description of methods planned for patient involvement in the study. Patient partners will assist the research team at all stages of the project e.g. steering group, interviews, workshops, user-testing, adapt written research materials, dissemination. The main barriers identified were challenges with patient partners' presence, project timescales, language, training/knowledge in research methods and funding. Main facilitators were knowledge, skills and experience in participatory methods, a positive attitude and a supportive collaborative research team.

Preliminary or final conclusions/discussion

A goal without a plan is just a wish; planning for patient involvement is crucial for identifying barriers, and to take necessary steps to overcome identified barriers. A planning process will enable close collaboration between patients and researchers and increase the likelihood of adoption of interventions after study completion.