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Finding a Common Ground

A pilot implementation of digital
self-management support in
Swedish primary health care

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Akademisk avhandling

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Abstract

BACKGROUND: Due to an ageing, multi-diseased population, type 2 diabetes (T2D) and other chronic conditions pose a challenge for primary healthcare. To meet such challenges, primary healthcare nurses must adapt to new roles and acquire new skills regarding self-management support. eHealth and digital solutions are suggested to facilitate the increasing need for care in chronic conditions. However, how these solutions are experienced among users has not yet been sufficiently explored. To successfully implement new working methods in primary healthcare, it is important to identify prerequisites and barriers that exist.

AIM: The overall aim of this thesis was to explore perceptions among primary healthcare nurses and patients about digital self-management support in T2D and also to develop and evaluate a digital screening instrument assessing individual needs for self-management support. This thesis is based on four papers. Papers I and II aimed to describe perceptions among primary healthcare nurses and persons with T2D of using eHealth services for self-management support. Paper III aimed to develop and psychometrically test a screening instrument for person-centred guidance and self-management support. Paper IV aimed to describe diabetes specialist nurses' experiences of a pilot implementation of the instrument labelled the Self-Management Assessment Scale (SMASc) as a basis for person-centred digital self-management support.

METHODS: A combined approach was used to collect and analyse data. Data in the qualitative studies were collected by means of focus group interviews (I) and individual interviews (II, IV) as well as participant observations (IV) were analysed using qualitative content analysis (I, II, IV). Quantitative data in study III were psychometrically tested. The participants in the respective studies were in Paper I primary healthcare nurses (n = 24), in Papers II and III persons with T2D (n = 11; n = 104) and in Paper IV diabetes specialist nurses (n = 5) and persons with T2D (n = 14). All data were collected in a county in northern Sweden.

RESULTS: The overall results constituted a web of mixed experiences and feelings towards using digital self-management support. Primary healthcare nurses pronounced their ambivalence towards the digital development in healthcare (I). Patients as well had mixed feelings, but they also pronounced benefits and potentials leading to increased involvement and empowerment (II). The psychometric assessment of the screening instrument, SMASc, demonstrated high potential and promising results for clinical assessments on factors affecting self-management behaviours (III). Preliminary results suggest that the SMASc instrument is considered suitable for screening of patients' needs for self-management support (IV).

CONCLUSION: The results of this thesis suggest that digitalization needs stepwise implementation. Digital tools such as the SMASc instrument can be useful in facilitating identification of patients in need of targeted interventions. However, primary healthcare nurses must be open to discussing patients' emotional adaptation to the disease as well as the knowledge, sometimes not evidence based, the patients may have obtained from Internet sources. Targeted self-management support including person-centred guidance is suggested to be an effective way to achieve patient.

KEYWORDS

Type 2 diabetes, diabetes specialist nurse, district nurse, diabetes care, primary healthcare, eHealth, digitalization, technology, person-centred care, self-management, self-management support, qualitative research, questionnaire, psychometrics, pilot implementation

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