Qualitative interviews to explore experiences of using web-based and mobile technologies to support self-management of type 2 diabetes mellitus

Kelly, L.,* Jenkinson, C., Morley, D.

Health Services Research Unit, Nuffield Department of Population Health, University of Oxford, Oxford, United Kingdom

*Presenting author

Objectives:

Web-based and mobile technologies offer important sources of information and support for people living with type 2 diabetes. While some evidence indicates that these technologies can help to reduce complications, further research using appropriate tools is needed to fully evaluate their effectiveness. This study aimed to inform candidate items for a new questionnaire to assess self-management in people living with type 2 diabetes using web-based and mobile technology.

Methods:

Qualitative interviews were conducted with 15 people living with type 2 diabetes to explore experiences of using one or more web-based or mobile platforms to manage their diabetes. Interviews were transcribed and analysed using the Framework method. Candidate items were developed to represent identified themes.

Results:

Web-based and mobile technologies supported users to reach and maintain tailored goals when managing their condition. Seven themes were identified as important to people living with type 2 diabetes when using technology aimed at supporting self-management: 1) Information, 2) Understanding individual health and personal data, 3) Reaching and sustaining goals, 4) Minimising disruption to daily life, 5) Reassurance, 6) Communicating with health professionals; and 7) Co-ordinated care. Thirty-seven candidate items to represent the identified themes were subsequently generated.

Conclusions:

Patients need to be supported to manage their condition to improve wellbeing and prevent further complications arising. Web-based and mobile technologies enabled participants in this study to get an in-depth sense of how they reacted to lifestyle and medication factors; something much more difficult with the use of traditional 'standardised' information alone. The candidate items will be tested in cognitive interviews and will inform a new questionnaire to assess the impact of web-based and mobile technology to manage type 2 diabetes.

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