

DemiCare+

Preventing depression of informal caregivers of people with dementia

ABSTRACT

Informal caregivers of persons with dementia (ICGD, PwD) represent a high-risk group, with 1 in 3 ICGD developing depression vs. 1 in 5 in the general population. Currently there is a scarcity of evidence-based prevention programs available to this group within the health and care systems. It has been shown that depression in ICGD compromises caregivers' physical health, leads to problems to cope with everyday life, and subsequently to inability to maintain their role and need for professional help. Moreover, depression in ICDG can impact health of the PwD adversely and has been shown to also cause the caregivers to place PwD in an institutional care facility more rapidly. It is therefore important to counteract this cascading health effect by supporting ICGD who are at risk or face first symptoms of depression.

The DemiCare+ project aims to implement an integrated solution for preventing depression in ICGD. The project will be based on the personalized information and training offer of the existing DemiCare app – a fully automated self-help preventive intervention that already provides interventions on how to deal with behavioural problems of PwD and for increasing caregiving competency. DemiCare+ aims at complementing this offer by providing a holistic approach for assessing and supporting caregiver resilience. The assessment of risk factors and protective factors will be based on reactive and non-reactive methods, also exploiting the potential of predicting early signs of depression based on data which may be digitally tracked, such as sleep duration and number of social connections.

The existing personalized prevention approach will be extended by connecting to local caring communities and integrating relevant local care services to better support physical care demands. Micro interventions based on Positive Psychology (PP) and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) will be applied to enhance caregiver's resilience and wellbeing. Towards this, risk factors, such as reduction of negative chain reactions (i.e., feelings of loss and grief), as well as protective factors, such as the establishment of self-efficacy (i.e., care competency) will be addressed.

To assess the effectiveness of the depression prevention intervention in reducing depressive symptoms among ICDG, the DemiCare+ service will be implemented in Austria, the Netherlands and Romania by integrating it into the standard clinical context (e.g. psychiatric hospital, GP, community services). This implementation phase will be accompanied by an active involvement of public health experts, as well as potential adaptors and implementors to explore the feasibility and acceptability of implementing the DemiCare+ intervention in real-world settings. Beyond specific recommendations for integrating the DemiCare+ intervention in European health and social ecosystems, results of the implementation phase will also enable the creation of general guidelines for the uptake of digital health preventive interventions.

KEYWORDS

- Dementia care
- Informal Care
- Personalized support
- Early prediction
- Resilience
- CBT
- Public Health

DURATION

36 months

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