

How assistive technology can support cognitive disability and secure active living for persons with dementia

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Assistive technology, which supports cognitive functions, is not used very often to secure activities and participation for people suffering from dementia, although cognitive impairments and dementia diseases are frequently seen in the ageing population.

This research is a collaborative project between 10 OT's from the five Nordic countries: Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland and Denmark. The aim of the research is to get knowledge about the use of assistive devices in the daily life of persons with cognitive impairment caused by dementia. The objectives are to enhance the use of assistive technology in the area of dementia in order to secure a high degree of personal independence and quality of life.

29 persons with the diagnosis of dementia and/or their relatives as well as professionals from service delivery of assistive technology were interviewed about their experiences on the assessment of need for cognitive assistive devices, the implementation and the use of these assistive devices in the daily life. A thematic qualitative analysis of the interviews was performed and it focused on the usefulness and benefit of cognitive assistive technology in the daily living for persons with dementia and on the function of the service delivery system.

The results illustrate which benefit the assistive devices give and which effect they have on the daily life according to the persons with dementia, the family and caregivers. The assistive technology:

- Strengthens and support social contact,
- Gives feeling of safety and security,
- Enhances quality in care-activities and in getting help
- Brings happiness and activity conflicts and creates fellowship in the family
- Supports daily living, ex:
- Minimizes uneasiness and gives relief for family/relatives

The conclusion is that assistive technology can enhance the independence and quality of life for people with dementia. A guideline for service delivery of assistive technology has been developed concerning the area of dementia.

This research shows how important it is, that OT's in the area of dementia focus on independence, activity and participation and that they must actively implement assistive technology in order to prolong and support the rhythm and variation of activities of daily living.