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Does assistive technology support everyday life for younger persons with dementia and family carers?

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Background: People with late onset dementia and relatives can benefit from using assistive technology (AT). Few have investigated the use and utility of AT in everyday life for younger persons (YPD) with dementia and their family carers.

Aim: The aim is to explore what characterizes the implementation process when the AT was experienced beneficial for the YPD and the family carer in their everyday life.

Method: The Qualitative longitudinal study followed 12 younger persons recently diagnosed with dementia and their family carers. In-depth interviews and observations during the process were conducted at the beginning and repeatedly every 3rd month up to nineteen months. The data is analysed and the participants' experiences are further discussed on the basis of embodied, social- and everyday life- situated approaches.

Results: Five elements in the process were identified as important for the experience of usefulness and successful incorporation of AT. The AT had to 1) be valuable by addressing practical, emotional and relational challenges, 2) fit well into or be a better solution habitual practice and established strategies, 3) generate positive emotions and become a reliable and trustworthy tool, 4) be user-friendly, adaptable and manageable, 5) interest and engage the family carer.

Conclusion/implications for practice: The study demonstrated the importance of understanding use and utility of AT on the basis of persons' embodied and social participation in everyday life. The family carers played a significant role in whether or not and in which ways AT was absorbed into the everyday life practice of YPD.