



MOBILE APPS FOR DEMENTIA AWARENESS, SUPPORT & PREVENTION IN AUSTRALIA: REVIEW & EVALUATION

AIM

Mobile apps offer a significant opportunity for sharing information and support for health challenges - including dementia. This study documented the scope, classification and quality of apps available in Australia designed for awareness, support and prevention of dementia. The review also sought to stimulate critical discussion on the access, quality and funding of dementia apps in Australia.

METHODS

- ▶ Systematic searches of the Australian 'Apple App Store', 'Google Play Store' and relevant professional websites were conducted in Jan 2020 using search terms 'dementia' and 'Alzheimer's'
- ▶ Eligible apps focused on: awareness & understanding of dementia; care needs or considerations for persons living with dementia; prevention of dementia
- ▶ App target audience included caregivers, community members, medical staff, health workers, and persons living with dementia
- ▶ Several screening stages were conducted by multiple authors
- ▶ All retained apps were analysed using the Mobile Application Review System (MARS) and classified by content focus

RESULTS – APP CHARACTERISTICS

- ▶ Total of 905 apps retrieved, 75 retained for analysis
- ▶ App audience was primarily informal caregivers/partner/spouse (75%) or health & medical staff/formal caregivers (51%)
- ▶ Content was mainly focused on information/resources (47%) and practical caregiving tips/communication aids (53%)
- ▶ Other characteristics: cross-platform apps (40%); free apps (91%); comprehensive apps (47%)



RESULTS – DEMENTIA APP QUALITY

- ▶ MARS 'Overall App Quality' was ACCEPTABLE (\bar{x} = 3.16;SD 0.65)
- ▶ Very few (1%) were rated as GOOD for MARS 'Overall App Quality'
- ▶ Higher MARS scores were observed for more comprehensive apps; those with higher engagement functions and those with professional affiliations e.g., universities, NGOs

DISCUSSION

Challenges for consumers seeking quality dementia information and support

- ▶ Complexity of app marketplace: excess of low-relevance products driven by commercial interests, boosted by ranking algorithms. A lack of dementia apps designed with, and for non-dominant cultures creates further barriers to accessing quality dementia support.
- ▶ Lack of quality dementia apps: average ratings of content credibility, accuracy, sufficiency with a lack of industry standards for health and wellness apps - consumers vulnerable to marketplace powers
- ▶ App sustainability issues: app losses during the study timeline highlight the fluctuating marketplace, including those with trusted affiliations.

CONCLUSION

A composite lack of quality indicators and commercial drivers of the app marketplace present challenges to persons living with dementia and caregivers seeking quality dementia information and support. There is a role for social and dementia organisations to advocate for, and assist persons living with dementia to navigate the app marketplace.

GR Chelberg [1,2], M Neuhaus [1], A Mothershaw [1], R Mahoney [2], LJ Caffery [1]
Disability and Rehabilitation, 2021, DOI: 10.1080/09638288.2021.1914755
[1] Centre for Online Health, THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND
[2] Australian E-Health Research Centre, CSIRO
References available in full text paper



SCAN FOR LINK