

Telecare Technologies and Self-Management of Chronic Patients

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Telecare technologies are instruments that enable care at a distance via the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). One of the aims of telecare technologies is to support self-management strategies of chronic patients. However, the ways in which self-management is articulated in the design and use of these new technologies is largely unaddressed. This research focusses on how telecare technologies participate in enabling and/or constraining self-management practices of chronic patients by questioning what forms of self-management are inscribed and enacted in design and use practices of a contemporary telecare technology for COPD patients. The research illustrates that telecare technologies participate differently in supporting self-management practices of chronic patients. Some patients develop adequate practices in living with their disease with the incorporation of a compliant form of self-management in the telecare technology, which includes a strict regime of technologically mediated surveillance. Others thrive better with a telecare system that supports a more autonomous form of self-management, including less strict medical surveillance regimes. In order to develop a successful and morally acceptable technology that enables care at a distance, the research therefore suggests incorporating flexible scripts supporting various forms of self-management into the design of telecare technologies, including the integration of experience based knowledge of patients and sufficient means for communication and education. Patients and doctors should engage in a process of 'shared decision making' to decide which script is most suitable to develop adequate self-management practices.