



Digital Healthcare Delivers for People Living with Diabetes

Wednesday 19 April 2017. UK. A pilot service-evaluation study, undertaken by Swansea University, has shown that watching short health information films online helps people living with type 2 diabetes reduce their HbA1c – an established marker of diabetes control.

The report, to be published in the May issue of the international journal Primary Care Diabetes, shows a clinically significant improvement in HbA1c among those patients who watched one or more of the PocketMedic 'Living with diabetes' films on their computer, tablet or smartphone.

The film-watching was associated with a mean difference in HbA1c of minus 9.0mmol/mol. A strong correlation was observed between the number of films watched and the reduction in HbA1c. Significantly, no reduction in HbA1c was observed in the non-watchers.

Swansea University's Professor Jeffrey W Stephens, consultant physician at Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Boards' Morriston Hospital and one of the report authors, said, "The result of this service evaluation is highly encouraging. The overall improvement in HbA1c indicates that film-watchers are more informed, motivated and committed to change their behaviour."

The anonymised study was undertaken by Swansea University's School of Medicine in collaboration with Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, Hywel Dda University Health Board and supported by the Diabetes UK Clinical Champions programme. Each partner organisation supports the need for further research into the potential of internet-based educational prescribing.

During the study, there were eleven films in the PocketMedic 'Living with diabetes' series including: What is diabetes? What can I eat? Diabetes and weight, Looking after your feet, Stopping smoking, Medication and monitoring, Jill's story, Jeff's story and Tony and Michelle's story.

Two Primary Care practices, within Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board and Hywel Dda University Health Board, identified 68 patients newly diagnosed with type 2 diabetes.

During a consultation with the practice nurse, each patient was 'prescribed' film-watching - by way of example see www.medic.video/diabetes - alongside standard treatments. The nurse talked through the nature of the PocketMedic films and explained that a routine blood test would be repeated after a 3-month period to monitor health outcomes.

Swansea University's Dr Sam Rice, a consultant physician at Hywel Dda University Health Boards' Prince Philip Hospital and one of the report authors, explained, "Digital prescriptions encourage people to access expert health information, practical advice and emotional support from the comfort of their own home. Each motivational film can be watched by patients and carers as many times as required and, crucially, at a time when the individual faces a new health challenge."

The study shows that 1 in 4 (28%) people watched at least one film within 3 months of being 'prescribed' the film-watching. This level of uptake compares favourably with highly-regarded and

structured educational programmes; where studies show attendance can be as low as 1 in 100 patients.

Dr Rice added, "With patient self-management widely recognised as an increasingly important treatment it is encouraging to see that this low cost and scalable solution is reaching many more patients than would otherwise be the case.

"Through further research, we may even find that the success of the film-watching becomes a stepping-stone to facilitate and encourage people living with a chronic disease to attend more structured educational programmes."

The bite-sized, self-management films were produced by eHealth Digital Media in partnership with the report authors, Professor Stephens and Dr Rice. Each film was reviewed by expert patients, clinicians and frontline healthcare professionals before distribution.

Kimberley Littlemore, co-founder and creative director of eHealth Digital Media, said, "With a growing number of people living with a long term chronic condition, the PocketMedic films provide a simple and cost-effective way of helping people become more expert in managing their health."

The relaxed and homely approach is designed to encourage people to become aware of symptoms, understand causes and recognise risks. The highly visual and engaging content features high-quality health information from clinicians alongside the personal and real-life experiences of people living with diabetes or other chronic disease.

Today, the PocketMedic library boasts around 100 films covering chronic pain, chronic lung disease (COPD), diabetes (type 1, type 2, gestational and pre-diabetes), heart failure, lymphoedema, life after cancer, wellbeing (anxiety and depression), and more.

Joanna Lewis, co-founder and commercial director of eHealth Digital Media, said, "This is an exciting time for the PocketMedic team. We're talking with many CCGs about the potential benefits of film-based prescribing and we're on track to roll-out the service, across the UK, by 2020!

"We've signed-up GP clusters and NHS Foundation Trusts, including Hampshire and Bath. We've received Welsh Government health innovation funding to allow all NHS Wales' patients to access the 'Living with diabetes' and 'Living with lymphoedema' film series. And we're re-investing the small income we've generated to extend the PocketMedic library in line with the health priorities of our NHS colleagues."

Through being better informed, people learn to make small adjustments that, potentially, help prevent health complications associated with their condition.

Professor Stephens concluded, "This small-scale but real-world study suggests that the prescription of an online health information film, alongside standard treatment, can afford significant benefits to the growing number of people who live with one or more chronic condition."