Reviewer's report

Title: Co-production in practice: how people with assisted living needs can help design and evolve technologies and services

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Reviewer: Caroline Sanders

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for inviting me to review this very interesting and timely paper on co-design of AL technologies and services with multiple users, providers and other stakeholders. The paper addresses an important topic given the ever increasing focus on the potential for ALTs to support management and self-care especially for older people with health and social care needs. The problems of introducing ALTs and assuming they will be adopted and improve outcomes, have increasingly been acknowledged. As the authors point out there has also been acknowledgement of the value of involving end users of services in co-design and re-design of services, and there is potential for a much greater level of participation in this respect. The authors report on conduction and analysis of participatory workshop events to identify the requirements for a socio-technical infrastructure to support the co-production of ALTs. The paper offers valuable insights with implications for implementation of ALTs within contemporary health care systems.

I would like to raise the following issues for consideration by the authors in making minor revisions:

The paper is valuable in exemplifying the methods and value of co-design; however, I wonder if it might be valuable to add some more detail and data from the workshops? For example, the authors describe using storyboards in one session for the end user workshops, and they provide one example to illustrate. I wondered what other storyboards were used – could these be summarised? Also, how did they decide on the topics for each storyboard?

The authors describe using constant comparative analysis but there is no detail of how themes were developed, and who was involved. The authors describe taking initial themes to a final workshop ‘to provoke discussion about how the user could be supported through collaborative efforts of their care network’, but it doesn’t seem clear how this came to be the focus from the initial themes. Also, how did the final workshop feed into analysis?

The authors describe the purpose of the workshops as being to explore perspectives on the design features of technologies and implications for services to enable and facilitate the co-production of new care solutions (abstract). However, the introduction then states the purpose to identify the requirements of a socio-technical infrastructure to support the co-production of ALTs. I think it
might be useful to unpack this term (socio-technical infrastructure), and to clarify how the purpose of the workshops was described to participants. It makes sense to me that there is a need to focus on wider context which is reflected in the themes associated with socio-technical infrastructure. However, some reflection/explanation of this, together with more detail regarding analysis, might help to clarify the links between the data collected and analysed, and the final themes. The description of how workshops were structured seemed to indicate a fair degree of attention was paid to technology and associated features, in addition to broader context (e.g. the storyboard illustrated, as well as the deck of cards to discuss design features). However, the technology and design does not seem to feature very much in the presentation of the themes. This also made me wonder if there were different themes emerging/prioritised in relation to the different activities? Were the same things discussed in response to the storyboards/vignettes, the card decks? A few more examples from the data might help to illustrate the salience of each theme.

The first theme (raising awareness and sharing knowledge) seems to overlap with the fourth theme (information sharing and coordination). It might be helpful for the authors to elaborate on the distinctions between these two themes, and perhaps illustrating with more data might help support the distinction?

Workshops with end users were restricted to existing end users and carers with experience of telehealth. I wondered did the team consider opening this out to ‘potential’ end users, especially because many older people invited to use telehealth (including in the WSD trial mentioned), choose not to use it, and the views of such people could also helpfully inform design of potential solutions/socio-technical infrastructure. Obviously, this is not to suggest any problem with the sample used, but more a point for reflection, and perhaps potential for further work.

Are you able to reflect a little more on the outcome/outputs from the co-design events as the discussion and conclusions seem to indicate that the workshops helped to identify the gaps, but because of the excellent activities described, I wonder about practical outputs? Did the co-design events help you to formulate new strategies/resources to facilitate co-development of new care solutions/or even the socio-technical infrastructure outlined? For example, did they enable you to actually develop new resources/strategies for raising awareness/information sharing, customising and adapting technologies, enabling ongoing social support?

Overall, the paper offers interesting and useful findings and highlights the importance of social processes for consideration in design and implementation of telehealth.

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests