e-Health platform to improve lifestyle for elderly

Cases of cardiovascular disease (CVD) and dementia in the senior population are often the result of lifestyle-related risk factors. This offers opportunities for prevention - a call to which one EU-funded project is responding with an interactive online platform.

The new e-health platform that is being developed by the EU-funded HATICE project targets healthy ageing, with particular emphasis on preventing CVD, cognitive decline and dementia in the elderly. The internet-based intervention is being tested through a randomised controlled trial taking place in France, the Netherlands and Finland. It involves over 2,500 individuals, above the age of 65 and with high risk for CVD.

As explained in a recent press release, the trial’s main goal is to determine if use of the platform and interaction with a nurse can benefit participants by reducing their risk of developing CVD, cognitive decline and dementia. The focus is on increasing their awareness as to what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, accounting also for the population’s specific needs.

HATICE researchers compared and integrated guidelines available in the study countries for preventing CVD, and conducted a comparative analysis of national and European guidelines for primary and secondary CVD prevention. The team is using this information to inform and develop the platform’s lifestyle counselling programme, relevant to the settings of the three participating countries.

“The possibility of devising common preventive programmes throughout Europe and delivering them through the internet means that we may be able to reach a larger portion of the population in a simpler and cost-effective way. This would improve our chances of better preventing cardiovascular disease and dementia,” says Dr Mariagnese Barbera from the University of Eastern Finland the lead author of the study.

Empowering seniors to enhance their quality of life

Divided into two groups, half the participants have access to an internet platform through which they can follow their cardiovascular risk factors. Here they can find information on how to reduce this risk through lifestyle improvements, and also interact with a specialised nurse who provides additional support and guidance and support. The second group has access to a simplified platform that has no interactive features and offers only basic information.

The guidelines are for the most part uniform, particularly as to what defines a healthy lifestyle, but limit advice specifically addressed to the elderly. The multidomain intervention supports smoking cessation, healthy diet and physical activity for older adults, as well as their ability to self-manage hypertension, weight issues, diabetes mellitus and dyslipidemia.

Different settings, different needs, one goal

In a pre-press article, published in the 'Journal of Alzheimer's Disease', researchers explain that even though they found cross-
country differences in the management of cardiovascular risk, “the study can help define preventative strategies for dementia and CVD that are applicable internationally.”

The press release quotes the trial’s senior investigator, Professor Miia Kivipelto: “The results of the HATICE trial will provide important information on how to better control cardiovascular risk factors in this age group, and plan large-scale preventive programmes.”

This HATICE (Healthy Aging Through Internet Counselling in the Elderly) study is a collaboration between the University of Eastern Finland, the Academic Medical Center (the University of Amsterdam), INSERM (University of Toulouse) and the Institute of Public Health (University of Cambridge).

For more information, please see:

HATICE project website

Source: Based on project information and media reports

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