



Living Better with Dementia

As part of the SBRI 2010 initiative, NHS South East Coast sought a technology development that addressed:

how to ensure people with dementia are able to maintain independence;

how to support carers by reducing the burden of care placed upon them;

MyAmego was chosen as a partner in this project.



Summary of findings:

Analysing the focus groups' and interview data, both the professionals and the carers saw many benefits in the home-based MyAmego system including:

- enabling the person with dementia to stay at home for longer
- ease of use for people with dementia and their carers
- active risk management within real time
- increased independence for the person with dementia and their carer.

All groups of participants agreed that any technology aimed at enabling the person with dementia to remain in their own home was a positive development that would be welcomed by professionals, carers and people with dementia.

Carers in particular said they were looking for products that would help their loved ones with dementia to remain safely at home.

It was agreed that the MyAmego system could reduce the stress and anxiety of caring for someone with dementia and that it could offer peace of mind to carers. Carers felt that they would be less worried and may have improved sleep as a result of having the system installed.

It was also felt that there was less stigma attached to the use of technology compared with that of moving to a residential home. One carer suggested that it offered a real alternative to residential care and thought the MyAmego system would be worth considering before a move to residential care, to avoid "knee jerk reactions" where the person caring suddenly feels they cannot manage any longer.

Participants felt that the MyAmego system was easy to understand, and easy for the person with dementia as they "don't have to do anything really" just wear the pendant. Passive monitoring was thought to be much more user friendly and useful when compared with other technologies where the person with dementia is required to actively press a button if they need help (e.g. a pendant/community alarm).

"One of the advantages of this is, that it allows people to stay at home longer, before they have to go into a care home, it's something that people might opt into because they get the benefit of being able to stay in their own home."
Health Professional

"I think an advantage is the detail; the richness of the feedback it can give you is quite powerful really... in this setting, I would say, I think the feedback about where people are and what people are doing... I think that building up a picture of somebody's life, working out what their normal routine is, and then work out the deviations and risks from normal routine, and using that to predict what might happen next..."
Health Professional

"I don't know of anyone [with dementia] who has successfully used telecare apart from the carers themselves, who might say, in an emergency, hit the red button on their box... But all the other paraphernalia, you have to press it, so this passive system, I think is definitely the way to go in some form or another, definitely."
Carer, female, 63, cares for mother who doesn't live with her

"I think they [the reports] could be useful, particularly for those carers that aren't like me, I mean, I'm here 90% of the time, but for anybody, they've got the parents, and they've got the kids, then it could be an idea for them so they know where the time has been spent."
Petra – Carer

"I think it's a brilliant tool for reablement I really do, because when people are being reabled this tool will [support] that; MyAmego will do the background work when that person's [support worker] is not with them."
Health Professional

"If they go down the garden - something like that - there's a risk. I think it's good, particularly for people who have got somebody living with them still, because a lot of people - a lot of carers - get quite stressed out because they can't leave the person with dementia"
Carer, female, cares for mother-in-law

"It would be easier to know that they're safe, in the house.... You know, you can do other jobs. You don't have to keep checking... it could ease your mind a little bit."
Carer, female, 75 years old. Cares for (and lives with) her husband

"It was very good. It was very good at letting us know when he was going out the back or down to the front door."
Petra- Carer

All participants identified the significant benefit that the MyAmego system would bring via its "real time" alerts to alert carers to potential risks. This was contrasted with other systems that have no "real time" risk management function.

In terms of the transition of the technology from a care home situation to a domestic home, the non-intrusive nature and discreetness of the sensors were thought to be an advantage. The usefulness of giving a single carer "multiple eyes" was identified as a positive attribute of the domestic home system. Carers were pleased with the choice of options available to receive the risk alerts, with some participants preferring to using pagers, and some preferring to use mobile phones.

Participants felt that the MyAmego system had the potential to increase independence for the person with dementia, by allowing them to be monitored unobtrusively but that it would also offer some freedom to the carer too which would allow both the carer and the person with dementia a little bit of time on their own, knowing that if an identified risk arose the carer would be alerted.

The professionals also agreed that the system would support the government's current reablement agenda in supporting independence. One professional thought the system may also be of use to people with a learning disability and their carers.

One of the trialists was a lady living by herself whose two sons lived nearby:

"There was time [during the trial] when it came in handy when she had a bit of a fall in the bathroom, and it sent us [a message] because she was in the bathroom for thirty minutes [the alert setting]. She couldn't get up... it's good, there's a lot of peace of mind knowing that someone is not going to get in any harm when you're not there... because it's the not knowing."

"I really enjoyed it [the MyAmego system] and my brother felt the same; he thought it was good because he stopped worrying that she was going outside. [With the MyAmego system] He knew she was going outside, and we knew what time she was going outside. We set it at eight o'clock because..., because she never goes out after eight, so there were a couple of times when she went off and we went down and it was handy and she was cold and she was wandering around so we said "Where are you off to?" and she said "Oh I'm going to the shops" and we said "The shops are shut". So I knew she was going out somewhere, it did work well; it is a good piece of kit."

"It probably did make her [Katy] feel safer because she knew that if she had a fall and couldn't get to her [telecare] string, she knew that she would only have to lie there a little while and it would tell us, so it reassured her a lot. I'm sure it reassured her to know that if she fell in the bathroom, or if she went outside and if she didn't realise she was going outside and she got lost, she knew it would tell us that she was going out. So it did help in that way a lot." George - Carer

"Oh definitely [the MyAmego product is reassuring for carers]. I think it's the best thing since sliced bread." George - Carer

To learn more about the comprehensive capability of MyAmego please

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