Dementia Caregivers’ Engagement of Informal and Formal Supports and the Potential Role of Consumer Health Information Technology

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Background. Caregiving for persons with dementia (PwD) is not without negative consequences for the caregiver. Although both formal and informal supports are available, it is not clear how engagement of formal support differs from that of informal (e.g., family, friends) support, or what technological interventions are needed to increase support.

Objective. To understand caregivers’ formal and informal support engagement.

Methods. Grounded dimensional analysis, followed by thematic analysis, was used to extract and elaborate upon themes from semi-structured interviews with 10 caregivers of PwD.

Results. We identified three overarching themes related to caregivers’ engagement of informal and formal supports: 1) caregivers frequently engage formal supports, despite experiencing challenges; 2) caregivers rarely engage informal support, despite availability; and 3) expectations of formal supports can be filled by informal supports.

Conclusions. Consumer health information technologies (HIT) have great potential to overcome caregivers’ challenges in engaging informal supports by acknowledging existing barriers to engaging informal support and working with and around these barriers.

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References
