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Working through menopause with e-help

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Image created by Dr Yee Mon Oo

Researching digital health interventions for menopausal women in the nursing workplace

Our international research study, which is exploring the experiences of working nurses going through menopause and gathering their ideas about what kinds of digital health resources would best suit their needs, has gained a new custom-designed logo (see above) and a new researcher.

Dr Sara Donevant from the University of South Carolina in the USA has joined us, bringing the total number of countries to five. The study is also being conducted in the United Kingdom, Finland, New Zealand and Australia.

Introducing Dr Sara Donevant



Dr Donevant is a former adult ICU nurse, who developed an interest in mobile health applications (mHealth apps) while helping patients manage their chronic conditions. She experienced the failings and limitations of current mHealth apps for chronic conditions, bringing a unique perspective and understanding of the barriers and frustrations of patients with chronic diseases attempting to self-manage.

Dr Donevant has a master's degree in Nursing Informatics and a PhD in Nursing Science. Her research experience has involved several aspects of mHealth apps. First, she was part of a diverse team on the R01 NIH/NLM grant *Validating Triage for Chemical Mass Casualty Incidents - A First Step*. This five-year project involved the development of an evidence-based mHealth app that used artificial intelligence (AI) to assist in the early detection of a chemical exposure to enhance patient triage during a chemical mass casualty incident. The incorporation of evidence to direct the AI was essential in this process. Currently she is involved in the development of an mHealth app to improve the treatment adherence to endocrine therapy in African American women with breast cancer. In this project, the patient's race, ethnicity, and culture are essential considerations in the development process. This project provided insight into the unique needs and desires of this at-risk population. Finally, Dr Donevant's F31 NIH/NLM grant *An Evidence-Based Evaluation Tool to Assist Healthcare Providers in Their Assessment of Effective mHealth Applications of the Management of Chronic Health Conditions* focused on mHealth features and how specific features or combinations of features promote positive patient outcomes (e.g., decreased blood pressure) and how this can be used to evaluate mHealth apps. She has extensive knowledge of the mHealth literature, especially mHealth features that promote positive patient improvements in health measures, such as blood pressure and weight.

Where are we up to?

UK – Data collection and analysis has been completed.

Australia – The low risk ethics application is awaiting final approval from the University of Newcastle Human Research Ethics Committee. References have been entered into EndNote and are available for sharing.

New Zealand – Two focus group have been completed. Kerri-Ann is in the process of transcribing the data. She has more people who would like to be involved and may do a third group.

Finland – Ready to start focus groups but do not have a date at this time.

USA - The project was reviewed in November and received an exemption from Human Research Subject Regulations at the University of South Carolina. Sara is looking forward to recruiting her participants.

Season's greetings!

The research teams in Australia, New Zealand, Finland, United Kingdom and United States extend to all their best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

Project Publications

Cronin, C., Hungerford, C., & Wilson, R. L. (2020). Using Digital Health Technologies to Manage the Psychosocial Symptoms of Menopause in the Workplace: A Narrative Literature Review. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing* 1-8. doi:10.1080/01612840.2020.1827101

Many women experience vasomotor, psychosocial, physical and sexual symptoms during their menopausal life-stage. Specifically, the psychosocial symptoms of menopause can include loss of confidence, issues with self-identity and body image, inattention and loss of memory, increased levels of stress, and a higher risk of developing anxiety and depression. In the workplace, such symptoms can impact the woman's capacity to perform to her optimal levels. Even so, many women do not seek help to manage their symptoms due to feelings of embarrassment, the possibility of experiencing adverse reactions from others, or the cultural taboos that are attached to the condition. Digital health technologies, including virtual consultations, therapeutic interventions, and participation in online communities of support, provide an important means by which women can obtain information about menopause. In the field of mental health, digital technologies have an increasing evidence base. This paper considers how mental health practitioners can adapt, utilise or recommend digital health strategies to support older women in occupational settings to manage their psychosocial symptoms of menopause.

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