



Investigation of the Implementation, take-up and use of an online personalised platform for those who care for people with dementia

ESRC DTP Collaborative Studentship in the Midlands Graduate School

University of Warwick and Coventry & Rugby CCG, South Warwickshire CCG, and AgeUK Warwickshire

The Midlands Graduate School is an accredited Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP), with the first intake of students to begin in October 2017.

One of 14 such partnerships in the UK, the Midlands Graduate School is a collaboration between the University of Warwick, Aston University, University of Birmingham, University of Leicester, Loughborough University and the University of Nottingham.

University of Warwick as part of the Midlands Graduate School is now inviting applications for an ESRC Doctoral Studentship in association with our collaborative partners Coventry & Rugby CCG, South Warwickshire CCG, and AgeUK Warwickshire to commence in October 2017.

The Studentship provides an exceptional opportunity to develop as a social scientist equipped for a future career working with interdisciplinary teams in health service research on issues related to digital health and caring.

Background

There are an estimated 850,000 people living with dementia in the UK, with around two-thirds living outside residential care in the community. Informal carers play a critical role in their support, but face numerous challenges from how to recognise and respond to the physical, psychological and social care needs of the person being cared for, to living with the uncertainty and isolation. A lack of support for carers is known to contribute to poor outcomes for the cared-for person, including avoidable hospital admissions, prolonged stays and delayed discharge. Digital technologies have the potential to address the information, advice and support needs of carers, but it is often difficult to navigate online resources and to identify sites that are reliable and relevant.

Two years ago with funding from Coventry & Rugby and S Warwickshire Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) Warwick Medical School established a collaboration with carer groups, third sector, NHS and local government organisations to co-develop an innovation (the Care Companion) to address carers' support needs. It is targeted through four principle themes (burden of care, lack of knowledge, self-efficacy and lack of time). Its design and content draws on the theoretical framework of the behaviour change wheel.

Through a process of co-development that involved carers and a digital design company, we now have a full working version of the Care Companion with functionality that includes: a profile of the carer and the cared-for person, a journal in which the carer can record key information, a mood monitor, links to personally-relevant online resources covering information, advice and support needs.

The Research

The PhD will investigate how to optimise the implementation, take-up and use of the Care Companion. Key research questions are:

1. What are the likely influences on the uptake and sustained use of the Care Companion?
2. How is the implementation and its use influenced by the expectations and experiences of carers, those living with dementia, health care professionals, third sector organisations and commissioners?
3. How do different implementation approaches impact on uptake, and potentially on health service, social care and voluntary sector service use?

The research will involve close working with local government and NHS managers and professional staff and voluntary sector organisations, and will draw on different theories of uptake and implementation. Potential end users will be involved in all aspects of the study, from its design to the analysis and interpretation of findings. The research will combine established research tools and methods from qualitative health services research (including systematic and realist literature reviews, focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews with a range of stakeholders from carers and patients, to health and social care professionals, managers etc employed at different stages of implementation. Thus, it aims to produce a mixed method, multi-level understanding of the Care Companion's use over time and of any specific issues that arise and their consequences.

The studentship will include placements with the collaborating organisations, to enable the student to immerse him/herself in real life challenges associated with implementing digital innovations. The student will shadow key personnel and be engaged in consulting with a broad range of stakeholders in collaborating organisations who are involved in design, delivery and commissioning of services to older people and those who care for them. They will attend relevant committee and planning meetings in the collaborating organisations, which will help ensure that the student's doctoral research generates significant impact – for the participating organisations as well as for society more widely – and that its potential to inform policy and guidance for best practice is fully realised. The placements will provide an opportunity for the student to develop as a Social Scientist well equipped for a future career working with interdisciplinary teams of clinicians, managers, patients, and healthcare and voluntary organisation on issues related to digital health and caring.

Application Process

To be considered for this PhD, please complete the Collaborative Studentship application form [available online here](#), together with a covering letter and your CV and along with two references email this to h.McGowan@warwick.ac.uk. Short-listed applicants will be interviewed on **8th March 2017**.

Application deadline: 20th February 2017

Midlands Graduate School ESRC DTP

Our ESRC studentships cover fees and maintenance stipend and extensive support for research training, as well as research activity support grants. Support is available only to successful applicants who fulfil eligibility criteria. To check your eligibility, visit:

http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/mgsdtp/studentships/eligibility/

Informal enquiries about the research or Warwick Medical School or Warwick Business School prior to application can be directed to Prof Jeremy Dale (Jeremy.dale@warwick.ac.uk) or Dr Nicola Burgess (Nicola.Burgess@wbs.ac.uk).