Book review

Using Technology in Dementia Care: A Guide to Technology Solutions for Everyday Living

In recent years the amount of technology adapted, adopted and produced for people living with dementia and their care partners has grown exponentially. Coping and living with a dementia diagnosis, and the lack of preventative or curative drug treatments, can understandably be overwhelming. As such, the editors of this book sought to create a "common-sense guide" to help people with dementia and their care partners explore the everyday living solutions that technology can offer in place of drug treatments. *Using Technology in Dementia Care: A Guide to Technology Solutions for Everyday Living* is an edited collection by Prof Arlene Astell, Dr Sarah Smith and Dr Phil Joddrell comprising of ten chapters (and multiple authors) across three parts. The first part covers an overview of the use of, and potential for, technological solutions for dementia, in terms of situating the history and current trajectory of dementia technology research (Chapter 1), how to best consider the needs of a person with dementia (Chapter 2) and exploring ethical issues of technology use (Chapter 3). The second part of the book offers some reflections on how technology has impacted on people with dementia, with regards to their home life (Chapter 4), outdoor life (Chapter 5) and leisure activities (Chapter 6). Relatedly, in Chapter 7, we hear directly from people living with dementia on their experiences of technology use. The final part of the book looks at the wider dementia ecosystem, in terms of the potential use of technologies for, the families of people with dementia (Chapter 8), the supporting organisations (Chapter 9) and a dementia-friendly future (Chapter 10).

The chapters are all clearly written and engage with numerous case studies and examples to bring the discussions to life. The authors cover a vast range of topics and potential technologies, ranging from GPS trackers to Iridis – a digital Dementia Design Audit Tool. One of the strengths of the book lies in its ability to interweave real-life examples of technological solutions, reflections from people living with dementia and their care partners and more academic and theory-supported reflections.

Another major strength of the book is its clear focus on the importance of involving technology users (in this case, people living with dementia and their care partners) throughout the design process. Relatedly, all authors highlight the importance of person-centred, and specifically often individual-centred, rather than technology-centred solutions which is welcomed. This idea is most strongly promoted in "Life at Home and technology with Dementia" (Chapter 4) and in "Technology Use by People with Dementia" (Chapter 7).

In Chapter 4, the author (Dr Grant Gibson) draws attention to the important (and often neglected) policy-angle to the use of technology to enable ageing-in-place of people with dementia. Furthermore, the wide range (mixed economy) of technologies that are emerging is

highlighted, further emphasising the need for individually centred approaches to technology use for people with dementia. Finally, the chapter sensitively highlights, drawing on many examples from literature, some of the potential challenges to using technology in the home including interoperability between devices and systems, and the varying levels of knowledge of available devices, the impacts of which may be experienced differently by each individual user.

Chapter 7 was a pleasure to read. It was personal yet professionally written. This chapter was written by Independent Consultant Nada Savitch, along with four individuals who themselves are living with dementia, and explores their experiences of using everyday technologies (some of which was dementia-specific equipment). This chapter was rich with direct reflections from four people living with dementia, and even the definition of technology used in the chapter ("things that help"), was constructed by Savitch's co-authors. The reflections from the co-authors highlight the individualistic experiences of technology use, with each co-author holding slightly different views of the use and importance of technology in their everyday lives. Finally, this chapter closes with a look to the future, which again emphasises the importance of considering individuals' needs and aspirations throughout the technological design process.

In terms of some weaknesses of the book, these mainly relate to the sheer size of the aim of the book – in trying to offer a common-sense guide on technological solutions for people living with dementia and their care partners, not everything could likely be covered in just ten chapters.

Firstly, it would have been nice to see a more critical angle to some of the

discussions. Although I recognise the book aimed to provide a common-sense guide to people living with dementia and their care partners, the book at times fell short in its critiques of existing and prior uses of technological solutions for people living with dementia. I understand the authors and editors may not have wished to scare its intended readers away from using technology altogether, but I believe a more balanced and critical approach to the chapters may have strengthened its overall argument and aim. Relatedly, I found the references to the concept of technology as "solutions" problematic, given the simultaneous (and I believe opposing) focus throughout the book on person-centred approaches to technology use, and wonder if referring to technology as potential "aids" rather than "solutions" would have been more appropriate.

Secondly, the final chapter offered some fascinating insights into the potential future direction for technology use for dementia, such as the potential use of technologies for people with dementia living in lower income countries. I would have liked to have seen more references to these areas throughout the book as overall the book mainly relies on case studies from higher income countries.

A final concern is over the potential longevity of the book, as the case studies are often specifically tied to certain technologies (which may quickly become outdated). Given the rate at which new technologies are being produced, adapted and adopted for those living with dementia, and the general increasing level of knowledge that older people living with dementia will likely have in the future, the degree to which chapters of this book may be relevant in the future is questioned.

Overall though, this book is a welcome addition to anyone wishing to learn

more about the role that technology can play in assisting the everyday lives of people living with dementia, particularly for personal or work-based situations. It fulfils its aim as a common-sense guide, but I also believe it would be a useful introductory textbook for a range of university modules and courses including health and social care, gerontology and dementia studies. I would welcome an updated version in a few years to highlight the advances in technology use in a (hopefully) more dementia-friendly future.

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