Soothing dementia carers: A pilot evaluation of an imagery-based wellbeing app feature to support family carers of people with dementia during the COVID-19 pandemic

Authors

Keren MacLennana,[b]*, Phoenix Byrne[a], Stephanie Allan[c], Katie Gambier-Ross[d], Pooja Jain[e], and Stella W. Y. Chan[a]

[a] School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences, University of Reading, Reading, UK

[b] Department of Psychology, Durham University, Durham, UK

[c] School of Health and Wellbeing, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK

[d] School of Health and Social Science, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK

[e] CogniHealth Ltd., Edinburgh, UK

*Corresponding author: Keren MacLennan, kerenmaclennan@gmail.com, Department of Psychology, Durham University, Upper Mountjoy, South Rd, Durham, DH1 3LE, UK

Abstract

Background: The COVID-19 pandemic has presented unprecedented risks to the health of people living with dementia. Confinement to their homes and extra pressure on the health and social care system, left people with dementia and their carers with reduced access to care services. Accordingly, family carers assumed more caring responsibilities and faced a greater risk of social isolation and loneliness, negatively affecting their mental wellbeing. In response, we developed a new imagery-based feature called Project Soothe within an existing app, CogniCare, which aimed to support the wellbeing of family carers looking after someone with dementia at home.

Methods: This new feature aimed to test the utility of our previous research which has shown that viewing soothing images has positive mood benefits on users. In this pilot, we examined the usage of the Project Soothe feature over a one-year period.

Results: Our results indicate the feasibility of the imagery-based app feature as we found that most users found viewing the soothing images to have a positive influence on their mood.

Conclusion: This finding illustrates feasibility of this imagery-based wellbeing app in this population of interest, and suggests that, upon further replication and research, the Project Soothe feature within the CogniCare app has potential to be developed as a digital wellbeing tool for family carers of people with dementia.