

Ethical Frameworks for Telecare Technologies for older people at home (EFORTT)

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Developments in telecare, the provision of health and social care at a distance, are rapidly evolving. They raise a number of new ethical problems including user/patient safety; the reliability of information sources; new types of provider-patient-carer interaction, and the implications of increased surveillance (including potential uses and abuses of data). More fundamentally they raise questions about what good care for home-dwelling older people means. Yet there has been little debate about the possible far-reaching consequences of these developments, for both individual users and carers and for health/social care practice and policy.

EFORTT is concerned with the implications of the introduction of remote care technologies worn, installed or embedded in the homes of older citizens/frail older people. It addresses an ethical and democratic deficit in this field which has arisen due to a proliferation in research and development of advanced care technologies that has not been accompanied by sufficient consideration of their social context. In-depth qualitative research methods will deepen the understanding of ethical issues raised by these developments and will develop qualitative approaches to understand the making of *practice* around telecare in both preventive and responsive modes. It will also develop deliberative approaches to the making of remote care *policy* at a European level by separately recruiting citizens' panels of older people and carers in each partner's region. By convening these panels twice: early in the research to gain citizens views about care systems, and later to consider research findings from the project, the study will develop a grounded evaluative and ethical framework to enhance the legitimacy of European policymaking in this highly sensitive area.

Key research questions:

How do new care technologies shape, and get shaped by, care practices? How do they define good care and how do they re/distribute tasks and responsibilities? Where do the risks and promises lie for caring, and being cared for at home?

Methods:

- Observation of telecare systems being introduced into people's homes, accompanied by interviews with users, carers and practitioners
- Initial group discussions of aspirations for home care and new care technologies by a series of citizens' panels of older people and carers (not connected with the above).
- Follow up citizen panels to consider the emerging findings from the study.

Each of the European partners will convene a local advisory group which will advise and guide the research; assist with profiling of the citizens' panels and advise about their recruitment; comment on interim findings from the detailed research and the panels and assist with local/regional dissemination of the project as a whole.

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