

Readiness of Estonian Working and Non-working Older Adults to Benefit from eHealth

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Abstract : Estonia is heralded as the most successful digital country in the world with the highly acclaimed eHealth system. Yet 40% of the 65-74-year-olds do not use the Internet at all, and digital divide between young and elderly people's use of ICT is larger than in many advanced countries. Poor access to ICT resource and insufficient digital skills can lead to detachment from digital health resources, delayed diagnoses, and increased rates of hospitalization. To reveal digital divide within the elderly population itself, the presentation focuses on the health information behavior of Estonian seniors who either continue or have stopped working after retirement to use digital health applications. The author's main interest is on access, trust, and skills to use the Internet for medical purposes. Fifteen in-depth interviews with 65+ working persons, as well as 15 interviews with full-time retirees, were conducted. Also, six think-aloud protocols were conducted. The results indicate that older adults, who due to the nature of their work, have regular access to computers, often search for health-related information online. They exposed high source criticism and were successful in solving the given tasks. Conversely, most of the fully retired older adults claimed not using computers or other digital devices and cited lack of skills as the main reason for their inactivity. Thus, when developing health applications, it should be borne in mind that the ability and willingness of older adults to use e-solutions are very different.

Keywords : digital divide, digital healthcare, health information behavior, older adults

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