

Educational Needs Assessment for Family Caregivers of Dementia Patients

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Abstract. People living with dementia are highly dependent on caregivers. We conducted an online survey with regard to caregivers' educational experiences, needs, and expectations. We found that most of the participants lacked educational experiences and expected updated methods through metaverse in virtual reality. Therefore, future studies should verify the effectiveness of education.

Keywords. Dementia caregiver, education needs, virtual reality

1. Introduction

As the population ages, dementia has become a global public health priority. Dementia is characterized by irreversible cognitive impairment, resulting in a high dependence on caregivers. Family caregivers of patients with dementia need education, but attendance at education facilities is hampered by time and access to venues [1]. Although online education is preferred, there are negative factors, such as poor concentration and lack of interaction. Therefore, this study aimed to identify the educational experiences and needs of caregivers of family members with dementia.

2. Methods

We conducted an online survey with South Korean dementia caregivers (aged ≥ 18 years) between September and October 2022. The survey questionnaire covered the following: education experience, needs, conditions, and expectations regarding virtual reality.

3. Results

3.1. Participant Characteristics

This study included 314 participants. Their average age was 44.6 (s.d. = 10), and 216 were university graduates. Among the 314 caregivers, 163 were living with patients with

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dementia, 58 were in full charge of the patients, and 161 shared care responsibilities with their families. Half of the participants (163/314) were children. One-third of the participants (118/314) had been providing care over the last three to four years.

3.2. Participants' Educational Experiences, Needs, and Expectations

Only 26.8% of participants (84/314) had dementia education, while the main reason the rest were not educated was the lack of time due to work, as shown in Figure 1. According to educational needs, 219 participants responded that they would like to receive education in caring for patients with dementia. Participants answered that time and location (235/314), as well as fun and interest (162/314) were highly considered when they chose education. In addition, 39.9% (125/314) responded that it was uncomfortable to be revealed as dementia caregivers.

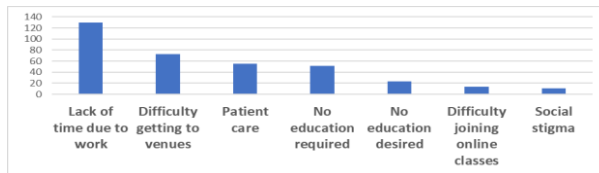


Figure 1. Reasons for not receiving education (N=230).

Regarding metaverse education, 59.9% (188/314) responded that it could be helpful. The average age of participants who answered that metaverse education could be helpful was 43.2, while that of the rest who responded that it would not help was 46.3. The difference in average age between the two groups was significant ($p < 0.01$).

4. Conclusions

This study found that it was challenging for caregivers of patients with dementia to receive an adequate education. Two-fifths were concerned about social stigma as dementia family caregivers, which might have affected their educational experiences. Because many participants had high expectations of virtual education, it was necessary to implement educational interventions and confirm the effectiveness of education in the virtual space.

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by funds from the Research Institute of Nursing Science at the Seoul National University.

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