

Tailorability in care services

SUBJECT:

A service platform for care services

OBJECTIVE:

To develop a basic care platform that can be easily adjusted to meet user needs

POSSIBLE APPLICATION:

In supervised or independent living situations for people over the age of 55

RESEARCH PERIOD:

2007-2011

NUMBER OF PHD STUDENTS:

four

RESEARCH INSTITUTE:

Twente University (Centre for Telematics and Information Technology)

PROJECT MANAGER:

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INDUSTRY AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED:

*Orbis Medical and Care Group, IZIT, IBM,
TKH Group, Mobihealth*

The IOP GenCom project U-Care aim is to order the explosion of ICT solutions for care services. It is developing a concept for a basic care system that can be easily adjusted to meet the needs of the user.



With the help of ICT systems, elderly can continue to live on their own much longer. This will increase their wellbeing, and as an effect will reduce the costs of an ageing population. With systems for fall detection or coronary care, care providers no longer need to be present 24 hours a day. Now, if something happens, an alarm will sound. Some systems help people open doors; others remind them to take their pills. A whole range of solutions is available.

The challenge is that those solutions are too isolated. "Each one is different," says Marten van Sinderen, project manager of U-Care and a senior lecturer in Information Systems

at Twente University. "Each has its own interface and support technology. There isn't any kind of integration." The explosion seems unstoppable. "The diversity is only increasing."

Tailorable platform

U-Care stands for User-tailored Care services platform, and that name reveals the goal of this GenCom project: the development of a concept for a basic system for care services that can easily be adjusted to meet the needs of the user. That kind of flexibility is necessary but lacking in the current systems. Van Sinderen: "The type of support needed by people over the age of 55 is not static. Their health problems tend to get worse over time, so adjustments need to be made in the kind of support that the system provides."

The researchers aim to create a platform that is fundamentally different from the existing systems by distinguishing between the basic functions and the accompanying services for the end user. Fall detection is a basic function, for example, while sounding an alarm if someone falls is a service. Such a structure would make it possible to use the same basic functions for different services without their having to be implemented separately for each service. This would facilitate the development and addition of new services and make it simpler to offer customisation.

Actual practice

U-Care involves not only software and technology specialists but also healthcare organisations: Orbis Medical and Care Group (which runs a residential care complex for integrated living in Sittard) and IZIT (an association of healthcare organisations in Twente that are exploring the possibilities of IT). The experiences that Orbis and IZIT have in their actual practice will largely determine which basic functions and services the platform being developed will need to offer, according to Van Sinderen. "Their needs are very important for us. Ultimately we want to be able to test the concept in a real environment. We will be asking them for feedback throughout the development phase." Through the end of 2011, the partners in U-Care want to explore what is technically possible and how that can be translated into an architecture and a prototype for a care platform. That will be in the form of a blueprint, not a final product. "We are doing basic research," says Van Sinderen. "We are not getting funded to develop products." The researchers will be determining the extent to which the blueprint is both affordable and technically feasible. Klaas Sikkel, a colleague of Van Sinderen's: "This kind of system will be a money-maker, but it also requires an investment. You can develop a technical solution, but you'll also need a good business case if you want to do something with it."

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