









USING TELEHEALTH TO SUPPORT INFORMAL CAREGIVERS

The Problem

			
<p>Who is an informal caregiver?</p> <p>An unpaid individual assisting patients with activities of daily living and adherence to prescribed medical treatments within the home and community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spouse/partner • Family member • Friend • Neighbor 	<p>They are not uncommon.</p> <p>Approximately <i>43.5 million</i> Americans provide close to <i>20 billion hours</i> of unpaid financial, medical, social, and instrumental support to chronically ill and disabled patients.</p>	<p>It is hard work.</p> <p>Informal caregivers' often report feeling unprepared, unsupported, and strained by the caregiving role.</p> <p>This has implications on the health and well-being of both caregiver and their patient.</p>	<p>Their work is invaluable.</p> <p>The annual economic value of unpaid informal caregiving is estimated at <i>\$232 billion</i>, a cost savings to the healthcare system that is nontrivial.</p>

The Solution

	<p>There exist many already developed and validated caregiver support and education programs. They have traditionally been delivered via support groups, which is not the most ideal way to disseminate this type of support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health care providers are focused on patient outcomes and often do not have time or resources to provide support groups for informal caregivers. • In rural areas, caregivers are geographically dispersed, making in-person, group-based support programs even less practical or feasible. <p>A number of the existing caregiver support interventions are being re-developed to be delivered online and through mobile apps.</p>	<p>You can be part of the solution</p> <p>Do you want to be part of an emerging network that would provide input to us in the development of an online caregiver support tool, and/or that will eventually implement this type of tool with the patients and their caregivers within the NRTRC region?</p> <p>Rebecca Utz (rebecca.utz@utah.edu) Alexandra Terrill (alex.terrill@hsc.utah.edu)</p>
	<p>A potential solution is to use the technology and provider networks that have emerged with the use of telehealth and telemedicine to provide support and education to informal caregivers.</p> <p>A team of researchers at the University of Utah is committed to creating a coordinated & comprehensive online resource for informal caregivers that would be cost efficient and could be integrated within existing patient-oriented health care practices.</p>	

