

Doctor-patient email consultations:
What do we know and what do we
need to know?

Aarhus

November 25, 2020



#Researchhighlights



Short presentation

We are a Danish research group within Human Health:

- Elisabeth Assing Hvidt
- Ditte Laursen
- Maja Klausen
- Line Maria Simonsen
- Anette Grønning



Large backing group - including our advisory board



- Karen Andersen-Ranberg
- Jens Søndergaard
- Karen Munk
- Kim Normann Andersen
- Heidi Bøgelund Frederiksen
- Theo van Leeuwen
- Srikant Sarangi
- Karianne Skovholt
- Anne Kankaanranta

Research project 2018-2021



How does email consultation (EC) and the way it is perceived influence the role of the patient, the doctor and their interrelation?

- The content and form of ECs
- The perceptions of ECs by patients and GPs
- The significance of the interactions > content and form of consultations
- Relational aspects of email consultations with GPs

The project is funded by The VELUX Foundations, Helsefonden and the Strategic Resources, University of Southern Denmark (SDU) > Digital Health

The next 35 min



- Short presentation of the research group (Anette Grønning)
- 1) Lower contact threshold, (2) accessing a new interaction space and (3) access to access? (Anette Grønning)
- What are the relational potentials of e-mail-mediated doctor-patient communication? (Elisabeth Assing Hvidt)
- Does e-mail-consultation afford specific perceived advantages for the 65+ male patient? (Maja Klausen)
- The content and form of digital consultations (Ditte Laursen)
- How are digital consultations embedded in the everyday working lives of health practitioners? And how are they used, produced and interpreted in interprofessional interactions? (Line Maria Simonsen)

Perceptions of communicative advantages and disadvantages of digital access

Content and form
Analytical and methodological framework
Genre

Relational potentials?
Relationally shaped and situated
Relationally resourceless/ful

A cognitive ethnography of interprofessional interactions with digital consultations

65+ male patients:
Potentials and barriers?



Perceptions of communicative advantages and disadvantages of digital access



How do patients and general practitioners in Denmark perceive the communicative advantages and disadvantages of access via email consultations?

(1) lower contact threshold

(2) accessing a new interaction space

(3) access to access

- The study adds knowledge of how the affordances of the medium of email consultation may impact access in doctor-patient communication

Semi-structured interviews: 'talk around texts' (Lillis, 2009)

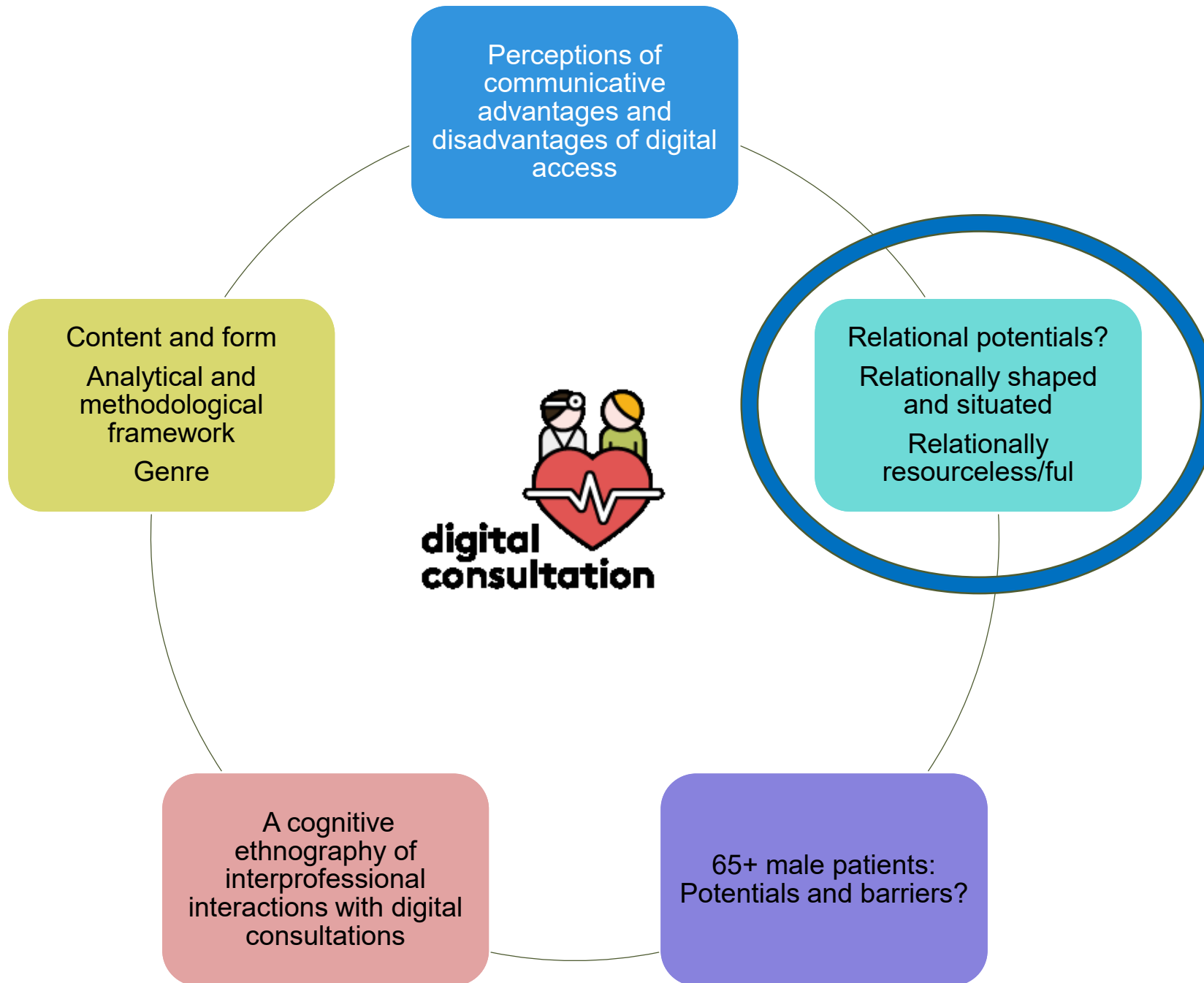
Grønning, A., Assing Hvidt, E., Brøgger, M. N. & Fage-Butler, A. (2020). Patients' and GPs' perspectives on advantages and disadvantages of digital access: a qualitative study. *BMJ Open*.

Perceptions of communicative advantages and disadvantages of digital access



Future perspectives

- More studies of content AND perception
- Focus on cohesive health care and health (in)equality
- Research knowledge from one digital consultation form (email) to another digital consultation form (video)

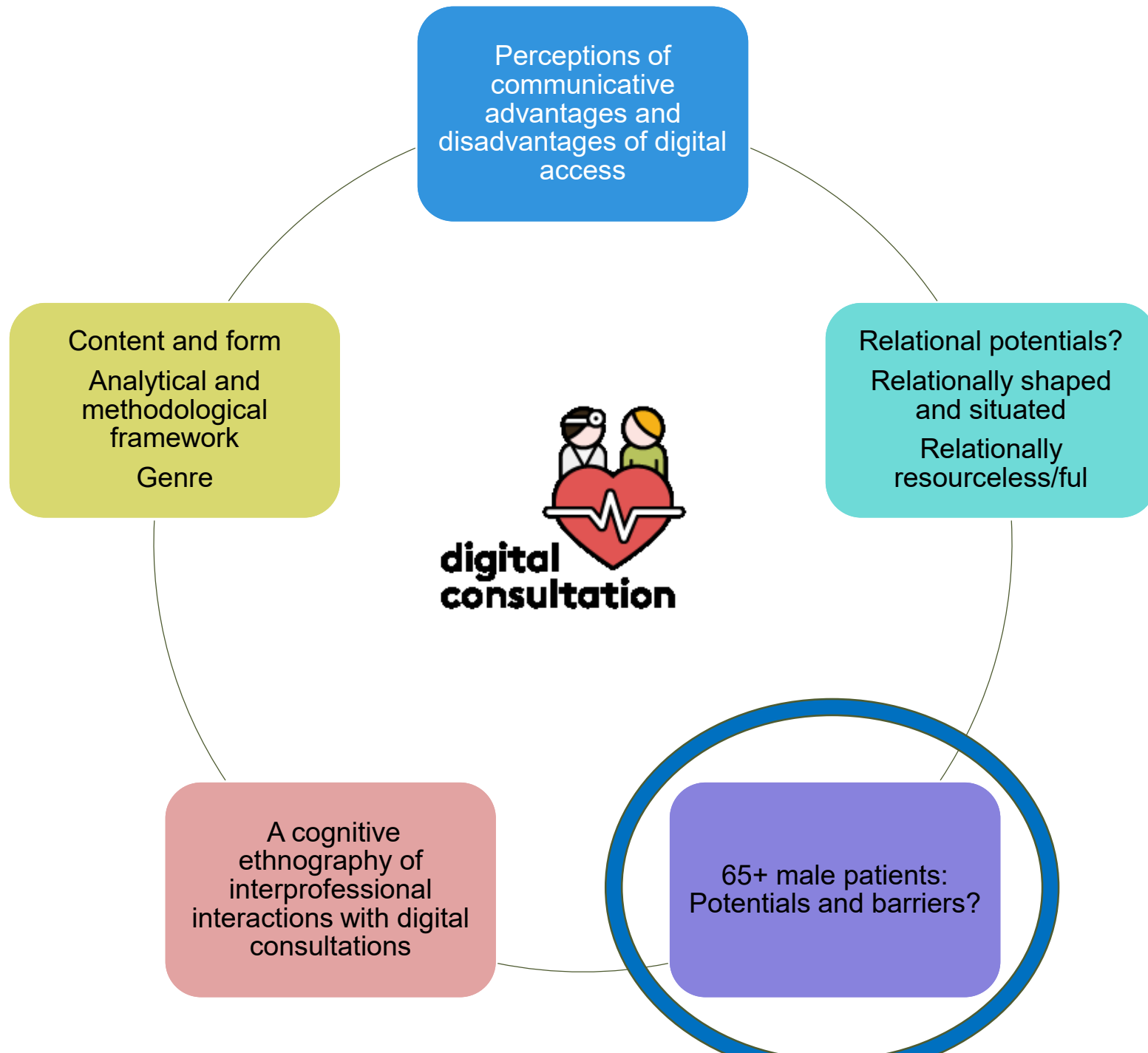


The relational potentials of digital consultations

- What are the relational potentials of email-mediated doctor-patient communication?
- Email consultation is not just an information-delivery tool: it is shaped by and shapes practices, interpersonal interactions- and communication.
- Email consultation holds the potential for maintaining, strengthening and/or dissolving the GP-patient relationship – depending on the relational resources that the GP and patient put into the medium.

The relational potentials of digital consultations

- What entails “good” digital provider-patient relationships?
- In what ways might “digital doctoring” become as “rich” as “analog doctoring”?
- How might digital consultations promote “commonality”, and “we”-experiences between patient and provider?



65+ male patients

Essential findings

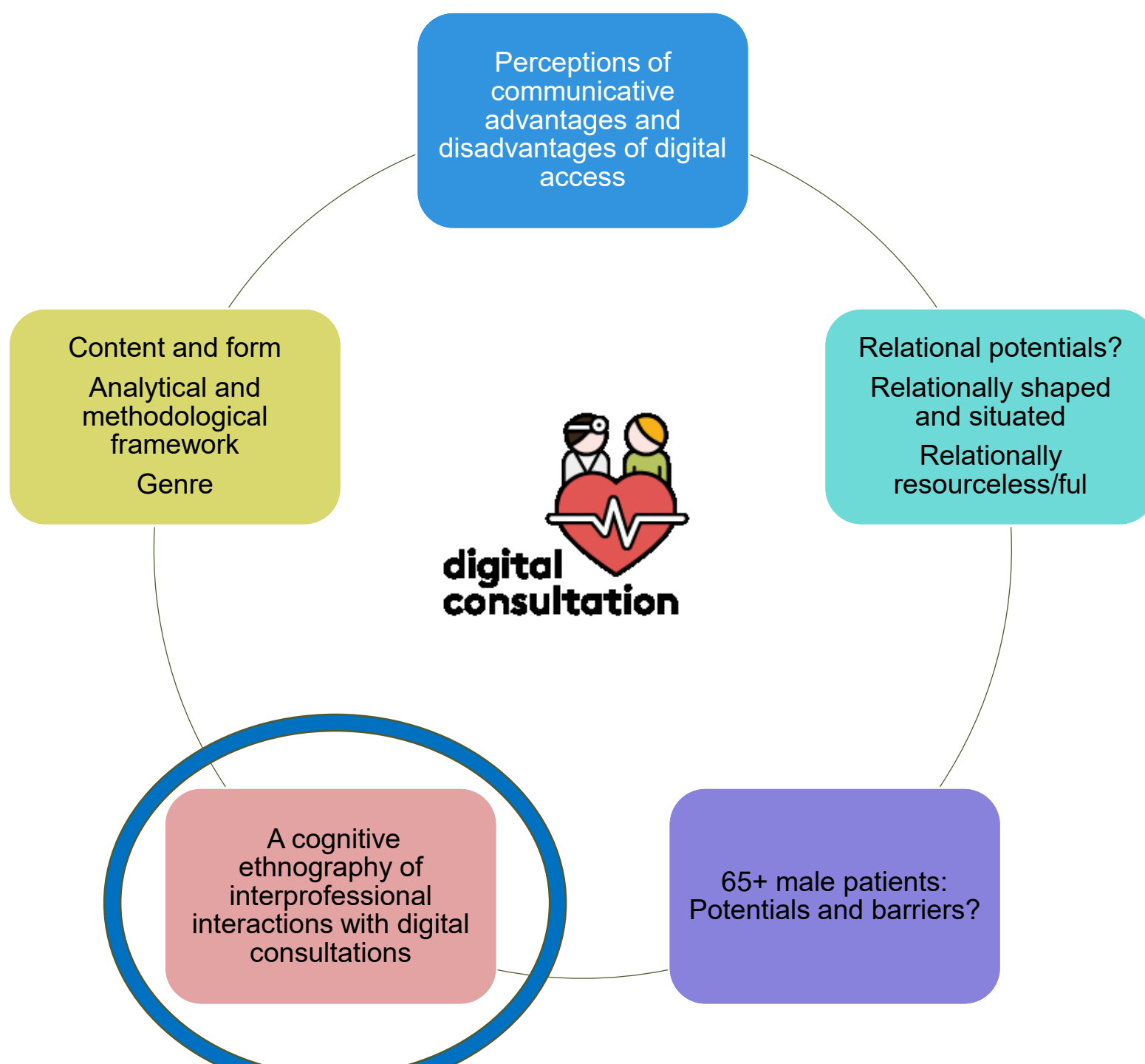
- Methods: Semi-structured qualitative interviews incl. "media go-alongs" and narrative vignettes
- Potential to support helpseeking that would have not been initiated u synchronous consultation channels (phone or face to face)
- Perceived as less intrusive than synchronous consultation
- Experienced as easily accomodated into the everyday
- Attuning to the body
- Chronical illness: An opportunity to "touch base" with the GP

65+ male patients

Future perspectives

(In)equality in health: Which findings will a study of male patients with low digital literacy provide?

Health data/patient data: In which ways does the datafication of the patient affect and/or transform patienthood and healthcare?



A cognitive ethnography of interprofessional interactions with digital consultations

The project found that using, producing and interpreting digital consultations involves the practitioners' abilities to navigate and manage *hybridity* (Linell & Thunqvist, 2003), in:

- Roles
- The balance of technobureaucratic procedures and emergent medical complexity
- Technical particularity and ecological multiplicity
- Integrating digital work and medical work

With an eye for hybridity, the medical-interactional complexity that goes into seemingly mundane and taken-for-granted technological practices are illuminated

-> Allows for reflection, professional autonomy and, hence, improvement potentials

Methods: Cognitive Ethnography with video-observation

A cognitive ethnography of interprofessional interactions with digital consultations

Future perspectives:

- > **On a scientific level:** *Challenge* the technological taken-for-grantedness
- > **On a practical level:** *Understanding* technological implications
- > **On a political level:** *Engaging* in the implementation processes

Perceptions of communicative advantages and disadvantages of digital access

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Content and form
Analytical and methodological framework
Genre



The content and form of ECs

Essential findings

Study 1

An analytical and methodological framework to address collection strategies and their implications in a systematic way in any research project, which includes email as data, as support or guide for future research projects

	Text format	Image format
Digital format	possible to handle as big data may come in proprietary formats may be structured/unstructured migration is inevitable for preservation	
	machine readable	partially machine readable
Analogue format (paper)	long-term preservability	
	partial capture of original visual display	capture of original visual display

Study 2

Genre is a productive concept for comprehending the communicative affordances of e-consultations and there are generic characteristics to patient-initiated e-consultations to the GP

Move 1	Subject	
Move 2	Opening	Hi Susanne.
Move 3	Update	
Move 4	Problem presentation	I have a hemorrhoid that is starting to bother me after every bowel movement that I have regularly every morning. It grows with the stool, but wears off during the day.
Move 5	Request	Do you have any suggestions for what a possible solution might be?
Move 6	Argumentation	Years ago, I had an elastic band put on a hemorrhoid at a clinic in Aarhus. It was not the most comfortable solution, but if it is the solution, I'm ready for it too.
Move 7	Closing	Thanks in advance. Regards, Carsten

The content and form of ECs

Future perspectives

Methodological challenges in describing and working with the context of email consultations, ie. a slice of the ecosystem (Hutchins, 2014) in which the email consultation exchanges are embedded.

Genre analysis not only useful as a tool for describing e-consultations, to understand the complex reality of such doctor-patient communication, but also for pedagogical purposes, for the medical curriculum, in line with teaching of how to conduct a medical interview or write patients' medical records.

A micro-analysis to complement the macro-analysis, i.e. a lexico-grammatical analysis investigating the salient lexico-grammatical choices and strategies which illustrate how the move structure steps are operationalized linguistically.

Publications



Grønning, A., Assing Hvidt, E., Brøgger, M. N. & Fage-Butler, A. (2020). Patients' and GPs' perspectives on advantages and disadvantages of access via e-consultations: A qualitative study. *BMJ Open*.

Assing Hvidt, E., Søndergaard, J., Klausen, M. & Grønning, A. (accepted for publication). Not just an information-delivery tool. Experiences with the relational potential of email consultations among general practitioners. *Scandinavian Journal of Primary Health Care*.

Laursen, D., Simonsen, L. M. & Grønning, A. (under review). Methodological challenges in researching email consultations as a form of communication in patient-provider interactions. *Qualitative Research*.

Conjunctions. Transdisciplinary Journal of Cultural Participation. (2021). Special issue on Health, media and participation, edited by Maja Klausen, Anette Grønning & Carsten Stage.

Klausen, M. & Grønning, A. (2021). My throat “tickles”. Bodies in affective discourse in patient–doctor email consultations. In *Klausen, Grønning & Stage (eds.)*. Special issue on Health, media and participation. *Conjunctions. Transdisciplinary Journal of Cultural Participation*.

Publications



Anthology in Danish, edited by Elisabeth Assing Hvidt, Anette Grønning & Jens Søndergaard. (2021). *Relationel opmærksomhed i sundhedsvæsenet – hvorfor og hvordan?* [Relational attention in health care - why and how?] Publisher: Samfundslitteratur.

Forthcoming:

Grønning, A. (2021). Struggling with and mastering email consultations. *Nordicom special issue on Struggling*.

Klausen, M. (2021). The digital old man. *The Old Man*, Aarhus University Press

Laursen, D. et al. Generic characteristics of the patient's email to the GP

Assing Hvidt, E. et al. Multi-level structures and human agency in relation to email consultations: Strong structuration theory analysis of the Danish general practice setting.

Simonsen, L. M. The shape of digital consultations in healthcare: Absent and hybrid presence in social interactions. *Nordicom special issue on Struggling*.

Grønning, A. & Mai, A. E-mail-konsultation i almen praksis. Refleksiv skrivning og samskabte narrativer. [Email consultation in general practice. Reflexive writing and co-created narratives]. (2021). Anthology in Danish and English > Narrative Medicine. Gads Forlag.

Other stuff



- Other dissemination

Feature article, Danish newspaper *Berlingske*, August 4, 2020 > Vi savner nuancer når det handler om at gå til lægen digitalt [We miss nuances when it comes to digital consultations]

Article *Månedsskrift for almen praksis* [Monthly magazine for general practice], August 2018 > presentation of our research project including invitation to participate

- Conference > you are mostly welcome!

February 23-24, 2021 in Odense (and online): The panel “Digital consultation” at the conference *Digitalizing social practices: Changes and consequences*, SDU. Anthony Smith, Srikant Sarangi, Helena Sandberg et al. <https://www.conferencemanager.dk/resemina/home>

- Continuing professional development and education

GPs: “Lægedage” [Doctor days], 2018 and 2019 (cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-19): Email consultations.

Medical students: Narrative medicine > Lecture including email consultations as reflective writing

Funding + Digital Health



- The project is funded by The VELUX Foundations, Helsefonden and the Strategic Resources, University of Southern Denmark (SDU)
- Digital Health > Human Health: University of Southern Denmark's strategic initiative within health communication. The initiative brings together academic research environments across the Humanities, Health Sciences and Social Sciences
- In 2019, we received funding from SDU for the next step within Digital consultations: **Video consultations between patients and GPs**

Thanks for listening!

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