A.J. ASTELL, E.A. WILLIAMS, F. HWANG, M. NORTON, T. ADLAM, K. LETHBRIDGE, D.WRIGHT, S. HARNEY-LEVINE, M. ELLIS. **COBALT: Challenging obstacles and barriers to assistive living technologies.** *Gerontechnology 2012;11(2):151;* doi:10.4017/gt.2012.11.02.426.00 **Purpose** COBALT is a new project aimed at understanding obstacles and barriers to adoption of assistive living technologies (ALT) by older adults and to develop new ways to overcome them and facilitate working with the ALT-industry. This paper reports the first stage of the COBALT project developing novel approaches to engaging with older adults about technology. **Method** Twenty-nine adults aged 65 years and over were recruited to participate. Fourteen (two groups of seven) had previously participated in a project to develop novel technology (NANA: Novel Assessment of Nutrition and Ageing) and were recruited on that basis. The other 15 (one group of eight and one of seven) were naïve participants who were interested in sharing their views about technology. Each group participated in a two-hour activity session, two groups being held in Sheffield (N.E. England) and two in St. Andrews (N.E. Scotland). The sessions for the two groups of NANA participants comprised one hour describing NANA and demonstrating the features of it to new users. The second hour involved 'show and tell', an activity we developed especially for these groups in which the participants are asked to bring a technology they love and a technology they have abandoned and share these with the group. The sessions for the two groups of naïve participants comprised one hour of show-and-tell and one hour working in pairs developing and delivering a brief pitch to the rest of the group about a technology they selected from a selection supplied by the researchers. **Results & Discussion** The four group sessions yielded large amounts of data from the older adults about how they approach and view technology. The show-and-tell activity was particularly illuminating as a means of gathering information about the features that older people like and what is important to them in making decisions about purchasing and keeping technology. The sessions with the participants who had previously participated in the NANA project were useful for understanding the ways they had learnt to use the novel technology, what information they had retained, and what they emphasised in explaining the system to a new user. The 'pitching' activity provided similar information about how people learn to use a new technology and what features they focus on when explaining it to another person. These data will inform the next stage of COBALT where older adults will work collaboratively with the researchers to develop materials for educating the ALT industry.
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