

Health and wellbeing related information management in families with small children

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Abstract

Understanding how families manage health and wellbeing related information in their everyday life is important in the design of appropriate information and communication technology (ICT) supported tools and services for them. The aim of this poster is to present a study in which we investigated health and wellbeing related information management activities and needs of families with small children taking Eastern Finnish families as an example. A qualitative study design was applied using the method of longitudinal virtual focus group discussion with eight households (n=8) over four weeks of time. Main information management activities were identified and grouped according to the different roles that families with small children play in society when seeking health and wellbeing: as users of health and social services, as consumers in the market of goods and services, and as citizens seeking a sense of wellbeing in its widest meaning. The study provides baseline understanding of everyday information management activities of families with small children to be applied further in ICT supported health and wellbeing service design.

Keywords:

Consumer health information, Family health, Information management, Qualitative research.

Methods

In order to gain an understanding of the most important activities of daily health and wellbeing related information management in families with small children, the question we sought to answer was *what kind of situations in their everyday life do families with small children engage in when seeking their child's or their own health and wellbeing? How is information managed in these situations?*

The research design was interpretive qualitative research. The data gathering method applied in this research was virtual focus group discussion. A total number of eight families who were expecting a baby or who had a child of maximum two years old were recruited for the study. After the data gathering period, a text file was prepared of the discussions on the internet platform and later analyzed by content analysis method for qualitative data. The study objectives and questions guided the analysis phase.

Results

Nine distinct health and wellbeing information management activities were identified in the data analysis phase. From the identified activities we inferred taxonomy of three categories reflecting the different roles that families with small children have in the Finnish society as health and wellbeing seekers.

Families act 1) in the role of *users of health and social services* (activities: maternal and fetal health monitoring, promotion and care; child health monitoring, promotion and care; applying for social insurance or private health insurance coverage and benefits), 2) in the role of *consumers* in the market of goods and services (activities: selection and purchase of child care or pregnancy related equipment; travel during pregnancy and with small children), and 3) in the role of *citizens* who aspire to a sense of wellbeing in its widest meaning (activities: seeking and maintaining peer and community support, seeking and maintaining peace of mind on health and wellbeing related issues, organizing and storing health and wellbeing related information at home).

Conclusion

The study gives a new perspective to understand information management activities related to health and well-being, rooted in the everyday life of ordinary families with small children. It aims at contributing to ICT supported health and well-being service design by shifting away from institution-centric or technology-centric approach and towards, we believe, more genuinely family- and people-centric approach.

The research serves as an exploratory study to a previously largely unknown field of households' everyday information management and as such opens up new directions for future research and, as well, we believe, for future service and technology design.