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Taming a Monster: Notes on How Making Online Interdisciplinary Cancer Rehabilitation Possible

Topic: Telerehabilitation

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BACKGROUND

This contribution draws on an ongoing ethnographic study of a novel digital cancer rehabilitation clinic to examine the everyday practices that sustain its online operations. It focuses on how digital technology is integrated into daily routines, illustrating how staff navigate the relational and technical challenges of maintaining a shared virtual rehabilitation space with their patients.

METHODS

At the heart of these emerging digi-clinical practices is the "Monster"—a term used by staff to describe the mundane yet complex interplay of fragmented organizational digital systems and the manual coordination required to create an integrated care process for each patient. These systems, intended to support digital patient interactions, often fail to meet the staff's expectations and operational needs. As a result, staff must continuously make the digital rehabilitation space functional, safe, and stable for individual and group virtual sessions. This challenge is also one crucial resource in the development of a shared understanding of how digital technology enables and support the online rehabilitation space, and, moreover, to be considered a key mechanism in the development of individual digi-clinical competence and practice.

RESULTS

By examining these mundane work activities, the study challenges the notion of digital transformation as an automated and seamless process, revealing instead the complex relational and labour-intensive practices embedded in its everyday enactment. This overlooked complexity offers valuable insights into how digital healthcare transformations evolve in practice, and in digital cancer rehabilitation specifically, emphasizing the challenge or understand the sociotechnical dynamics in play and asking questions about what requirements, characteristics, and relationships need to be established with and between digital resources to establish meaningful digi-clinical practices that will continue to build and maintain shared virtual rehabilitation spaces.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the complexity of sustaining digital cancer rehabilitation, revealing how staff actively shape digi-clinical practices through mundane yet critical work. Rather than a seamless transformation, digital healthcare demands ongoing adaptation and coordination. Understanding these sociotechnical dynamics is essential for developing meaningful, sustainable rehabilitation spaces and fostering digi-clinical work.

Statement of Disclosures

None

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