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CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

An example of conducting participatory action research within the Living Lab in Ageing and Long-Term Care: Developing, evaluating, and implementing a reablement training programme

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Demand for long-term care is rising, because of the aging of the population and the increase in chronic and degenerative diseases. Both community and institutional care services are facing challenges, not only caused by aggregated care needs but also through technological and related health care innovations. At the same time, the number of well-trained staff is decreasing, partly due to a negative image of care provision within the field of geriatrics. Innovations that address the changing needs and demands of the future are highly warranted and there is a strong need to develop and implement evidence-based practice and technology. Unfortunately, it may take on average up to 17 years before scientific knowledge is adopted in daily practice, and there is not a strong tradition of scientific research in long-term care. The result is that older people and their families, health care professionals, policy makers, and educators do not benefit sufficiently from new advancements and best available evidence.

In this oral paper a model for a sustainable and successful interdisciplinary collaboration between scientists, care providers, and educators in long-term care will be presented: the “Living Lab in Ageing and Long-Term Care” by Maastricht University in the Netherlands. It is a structural collaboration between academia, educational institutions, long-term care providers and clients. It covers approximately 185 long-term care facilities (e.g. nursing homes, assisted and group living facilities) as well as professional home care, and includes about 50,000 clients and more than 27,000 staff. Their mission is to contribute with scientific research to improving i) quality of life of older people and their families; ii) quality of care and iii) quality of work of those working in long-term care. Key working mechanisms are the Linking Pins and interdisciplinary partnership using a team science approach, with great scientific and societal impact. For 25 years this structural collaboration has served as an infrastructure that drives scientific research in long-term care in co-creation with end-users, including older people and their relatives, health care professionals, policy makers and educators. More recently, the model of the living lab is replicated in other countries such as the UK, Belgium, Germany and Austria.

After a brief description of the living lab, the collaboration between academia, educational institutions, long-term care providers and clients will be illustrated by introducing the “Stay Active at Home” study. In this study a reablement training programme for home care staff is developed, evaluated and implemented. The programme aims to teach home care staff how to stimulate clients’ autonomy and participation in meaningful daily activities. Finally, the symposium will end with suggestions how to replicate the model of the Living Lab in Ageing and Long-term Care in other places.