

The Quarterly Report

News from the Research Team at Aston University

October 2014

Welcome to the autumn and penultimate edition of the Quarterly Report. Keeping you up to date with the research carried out for ExtraCare by Aston University. It is hard to believe that our three year study will finish in February 2015.

In this issue we will give updates of the study from:

- Combinations of data types
- Activities diary
- Health data

And as ever remind you how you can take part in other research

RESEARCH UPDATES

Example Scientific Meetings

We will be making two presentations of data at the 10th Annual Scientific Meeting of the UK Society for Behavioural Medicine. This will take place Wednesday 3rd and Thursday 4th December 2014 at the East Midlands Conference Centre in Nottingham. One combines data and analysis from the qualitative, economics and quantitative aspects of the study. Overall the data indicates that health and well-being has improved for residents who have moved from an unsuitable living environment into a quality purpose built environment, namely ExtraCare.

Many participants said they felt like they were “on holiday”, but mostly they enjoyed the security that living in ExtraCare provides. Companionship of other residents and making new associations and friendships was valued.

Life at ExtraCare certainly revolves around the café!

Another presentation looks at the impact of activities from the diary data many people provided. We find that keeping active is having a positive impact on some of the measures of memory we take, and that in turn is having a positive impact on people’s mood – e.g. reducing depression.

Progress with health data

Recently we have been combining measures we have collected from both the Well-being and Aston assessments to develop a simple combined indicator of resilience versus frailty for each participant in the study. This takes into account factors such as the number of medical conditions someone has, as well as measures related to their mobility, cognition and independence. This indicator is calculated at baseline (i.e. when the resident had just moved into ExtraCare) and then 1 year later using the 12 months assessment data. Work is still on-going to make the indicator as robust as possible. We know from background research that this can suggest people who may specifically benefit from interventions such as exercise or nutrition changes, and indicate people who may need a bit more support. Once complete we will be looking closely at the factors which impact most on such resilience and also how it may relate to outcomes such as hospital admission patterns and health and social care costs. We are very interested to compare factors like how long someone who is a little frail spends in hospital

when they are ill if they live in ExtraCare, compared with someone with similar health concerns who doesn't live in ExtraCare.

Progress with Aston assessments

There has been a lot of progress with the collection of resident survey data. All of the baseline and 3 month follow-ups are complete, and we are now nearing completion of collection of data for the 12 and 18 month follow-ups. We are aiming to complete all follow-ups by the end of December.

Recently we have been looking at factors which may have an impact on cognitive functioning. This is a term used to describe performance on tasks requiring mental processes such as thinking, understanding and remembering.

Our analysis suggests that for those individuals that do have some mild impairment in their cognitive functioning, there may be some impact on their ability to do everyday tasks (such as driving, shopping, financial planning), and even be related to things like walking speed and recalling personal memories. However, performance on some of these tasks does improve after moving in to ExtraCare, and these improvements over time are not occurring for those with mild difficulties not living in ExtraCare.

We will be looking further into how the retirement community environment could potentially improve cognitive functioning for everyone, and which activities are beneficial for mild cognitive impairment.

WELLBEING CHECK

If you are part of the Aston study and think you may be overdue for a well-being check

please do get in touch with us, details below, or contact your well-being advisor. We look forward to hearing from you as your continued participation is important to us.

TAKING PART IN RESEARCH

If you would like to take part in other research, we invite you to join the ARCHA panel. The ARCHA Panel are a group of volunteers who take part in research and are invited to talks on various topics associated with ageing (such as drug development, changes in vision and hearing, mobility, diet, exercise and memory). If you would like further information please contact Wendy Overton on 0121 204 4134 or

lhs_archa@aston.ac.uk

Please remember that all times it is your choice to take part in any research and you may withdraw from the study without saying why.

WHAT'S IN THE NEXT ISSUE?

In the Final Quarterly Report due January 2015, we will give you an overview of the research.

For now we wish to thank all of you who are taking and have taken part in this study, and a special thank you to ExtraCare staff, for helping us to arrange such successful visits.

We hope you all have a great autumn and a wonderful Christmas and New Year!

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