

“ As soon as the Tely HD was launched, I saw it was the right solution. It is very easy to use. All you need is a simple remote control, and there’s no need for a computer. ”

The Challenge

Social isolation has been convincingly proven to increase the risk of ill health. Socially isolated and elderly people are 60% more likely to suffer from mental and physical health issues, more prone to heart attacks and more likely to require emergency treatment resulting in the need to be transferred to supervised living facilities.

With an increasing number of elderly people living on their own, the task of keeping them safe, well and socially connected has become a medical, social and financial challenge. In the UK, the cost of keeping at-risk individuals in residential care homes runs at about £3,000 per month and the bulk of these charges are borne by the National Health Service (NHS).

“Cheering people up has medical as well as social implications,” says Dr. John Havard, a British general medical practitioner (GP) based in rural Suffolk, England. “If we can make older patients happier and more involved in their social circles, then we know it is good for their health while supporting NHS goals of spending less to do more. Video conferencing is a promising option in this regard, but ensuring that it’s easy for older people to use is crucial.

The Solution

The most important element of the project was finding a video conferencing solution that was affordable, secure, and easy enough for even the least technically minded patient to use. Older people are unlikely to use computers, but almost without exception, this age group watches television, so the launch of the Tely HD set top video conferencing device in early 2012 was a breakthrough for the project.

The Tely HD appliance provides an extremely simple, user-friendly way to make or receive HD Skype video calls with any Skype-enabled device. The Tely HD includes Skype, four noise-canceling microphones, a camera and the ability to share photographs or other documents. Importantly, Tely HD is a completely self-contained set-top device. No computer is required.

Company

Facelook

Industry

Healthcare

Location

United Kingdom

Product(s)

Tely HD Base Edition

Dr. Havard emphasizes the importance of simplicity and ease of use when dealing with elderly patients, and highlights the auto-answer feature of the Tely HD as a particular benefit. “Patients don’t have to do anything to receive a call if they are watching the TV when a video call comes in, after a few rings the picture switches over to show the caller. As soon as the call is over, the TV automatically returns to normal mode.”

The Benefits

Patient response has been extremely encouraging. “Being able to see more of their families appeared to have a more significant benefit even than the potential to consult with a friendly Red Cross volunteer on a regular basis,” observed Dr. Havard. “It was a strange experience at first, but became a major benefit as patients, families and friends found they were able to share more of their lives and activities and host larger conversations.”

People who normally find audio-only calls difficult – a typical side effect of social isolation - were delighted to be able to see their callers’ body language and facial expressions. Those with hearing problems were able to take advantage of the audio features to turn up the volume as much as they needed, and lip read. The daughter of a patient who had made a number of serious mistakes with his medication was able to help her father count his pills every night – from Australia.

“Since my husband died this year I have no relatives left apart from a nephew in South Wales,” said patient Mrs. Faithful. “He ‘facelooks’ me nearly every night and it is lovely to see and hear him. I really look forward to that.”