‘Dementia Talk App’

Family members or friends who are caring for a person with dementia often struggle with how to deal with behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia. A team of clinicians from the Reitman Centre at Mount Sinai Hospital collaborated with software developers to develop a new phone application, called ‘Dementia Talk App’. The app is designed to help caregivers of people with dementia track and manage behaviours and emotions of persons with dementia at home.

This App has three main components:

1. Responsive Behaviour Management: Caregivers are guided through a process to problem solve and identify probable triggers and reasons for challenges in caring for the person with dementia. The app then directs the caregiver through clinically proven strategies to manage these challenges. The caregiver may select the strategies that they believe would be most effective and have the option of creating a personalized intervention plan.

2. Responsive Behaviour Tracker: The app has a system that allows caregivers to graphically track the relationship between events and behaviours. These graphing features help the caregiver chart relationships between events and behaviours and thereby identify triggers for the behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia. In addition the tracking system can inform the caregiver on the success of employing strategies to manage behaviours.

Another important feature of the behavior tracker is the option of sharing the graphs and charts with other family members and care providers including their family doctor through a secure cloud system.

3. Caregiver Corner: Caregivers typically fail to care for themselves. The app offers advice and suggestions as well as strategies such as stress management and mindfulness exercises to help the caregiver look after themselves.

This App recently won first place in the Caregiver category of the ‘DementiaHack’ competition in Toronto. DementiaHack is a Hackathon (a 30 hour blitz competition of techie’s and creative minds who have to create a working computer based tool to address a key area of dementia care or research). In this competition, there were 4 challenge sets, the largest one being for caregivers.

Currently the App is being under further development further and the team is working hard to prepare it for release to the market in the next few months.

The team is hoping the App will reach as many caregivers in the community as possible to serve as a companion to caregivers in managing challenging situations at home and will help bring people with dementia and their caregivers closer together. In addition the vision of the App team is to augment the dialogue between caregivers and care providers through empowering caregivers in better communicating what is happening at the home environment.