

Living Well with Mild Cognitive Impairment

How can design support people experiencing changes to their memory & thinking?

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Background and aims

Mild cognitive impairment (MCI) refers to memory and thinking problems greater than those of ‘normal’ age-related decline, and is associated with a higher risk of dementia. In this ongoing project, researchers aim to identify the key issues of concern for people with MCI and their whānau to inform a co-designed interactive online resource.

Method

This project uses an iterative co-design approach supported by in-depth interviews with a number of potential end-users. This includes people with a formal MCI diagnosis (n=11), their family members (n=9), as well as people who do not have a formal diagnosis but have concerns about changes to their memory and thinking (n=8). A subset of these participants are involved in the more active co-design component of this project and are supporting the concept development of the resource through workshops, user-feedback, and user-testing.

Outcomes

Preliminary findings have a number of implications for the design of this online resource. For example, not everyone with a formal diagnosis of MCI knows they have the diagnosis, while others find it difficult to conceptualise the difference between ‘normal’ age-related decline, MCI, and early dementia. Therefore the language used in the design is careful not to overemphasise ‘MCI’ and instead focuses on encouraging people to share tips and strategies for managing changes to their memory and thinking.

“I lose things, I forget things, [...] I often forget when I’ve made appointments, even when I’ve got it written in my diary.”

“You feel so stupid, you feel so utterly stupid and useless and the harder you try to remember the further it goes.”

