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Rural residents' perceptions and needs of telecare in Taiwan.

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Summary: The purpose of this study was to explore rural residents' perceptions and needs of a telecare system after they have used it. The samples were collected using structured questionnaires with face to face interviews between July 1 and September 30, 2009. Results from this exploratory study show that most elderly people have never heard or touched telecare systems before the study was conducted. However, the general perceptions of such systems include improvement of interacting with medical staffs, safety protection, convenient care, and one needed item of services in daily life. Especially, the mostly risk perception is privacy risk, that is, data confidentiality and individual privacy. Generally, most elderly residents evaluated their telecare experiences and perceptions as being positive. Besides, most elderly resident were willing to use the telecare system without fees. However, they felt risky about confidentiality and privacy toward this technology. To improve trustworthy perception of this novel technology, telecare providers should implement appropriate safeguards to protect patient health information exchanged in a telecare setting. Also, the physicians/nurses should take the time to communicate with the residents, especially in the form of education, about the benefits of technology. To optimize the effectiveness of this promising technique, more research on the relationship between residents' (or patients') perceptions and influences of technology will need to be conducted continually in future.

Keywords: telecare; risk perceptions; data confidentiality; individual privacy; needs assessment
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