

Phone App to Assist Alzheimer’s Caregivers

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Alzheimer’s disease is mostly a condition of old age. Since life expectancy is getting longer around the world, the number of people affected by the brain disease is expected to triple in some countries by the middle of the century. People with Alzheimer’s often have other medical needs that require the services of numerous health care professionals. Caregivers often have a hard time keeping up with all the medical information.

More and more, family members are being called on to help care for loved ones with Alzheimer’s. It is a responsibility for which most people are unprepared. This is why the Hebrew Home, a private health care group in Riverdale, New York, developed an iPhone and iPad application called “Balance.”

The app offers caregivers advice on recognizing symptoms and on feeding, bathing and providing a healthy environment for the patient. It can be bought on the Internet for four dollars. David Pomeranz is Hebrew Home’s program development director, and he created “Balance.”

“It is not easy and we hope this will make it a little easier for people.”

The Hebrew Home is a not-for-profit organization that provides care to 75,000 patients throughout New York City.

“We are dealing with their family members because, as a philosophy, we feel that we need to care for the caregiver equally in our (response to the) care needs (of) the clients themselves, since if the caregiver does not have the proper supports, they simply cannot be a caregiver.”

Mister Pomeranz says the “Balance” software is designed to let users organize medical and other information so they can easily keep track of the person’s health. It helps caregivers manage doctor’s appointments and share information with doctors about the patient’s daily emotional changes.

Interest in the app is not limited to the United States.

“It has been interesting to see that we have had apps purchased (in countries) from Egypt to the Netherlands to Greece. It is like the United Nations every day, to see where people are buying this.”

David Pomeranz says software developers are working on a version of “Balance” for mobile devices using the Android operating system.

In a separate but unrelated story, scientists at Washington University School of Medicine in Saint Louis, Missouri have identified genes linked to Alzheimer’s disease. They say the discovery could help researchers develop new drugs against the brain disease. Go to voanews.com to hear more about this story.

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