Delivering Cognitive Stimulation Therapy (CST) Virtually

teleCST

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Why this is Needed

- PwDs vulnerable during infection outbreaks
- Home isolation & visitation restriction
  - important infection control measures
  - but worsen cognition, symptoms & QoL (e.g., agitation, loneliness & depression)
  - additional burden on carers
- Importance of ICT & e-mental health recently highlighted
  - but lower mental capacity & IT literacy in PwDs & aged carers
- can we apply ICT for dementia care?

"Father of Fiber Optics". Lived with AD from 2004. Founded an NGO to support PwDs and carers together with his wife Mrs Gwen Kao

Charles K. Kao

Facts

Charles Kuen Kao
The Nobel Prize in Physics 2009
Born: 4 November 1933, Shanghai, China
Died: 23 September 2018, Hong Kong
Affiliation at the time of the award: Standard Telecommunication Laboratories, Harlow, United Kingdom, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China
Prize motivation: "for groundbreaking achievements concerning the transmission of light in fibers for optical communication."
Prize share: 1/2
What is CST?

• The only non-drug therapy endorsed by UK guidelines & international report
• Intended to be an enjoyable social experience, not a test of ability
• Evidence on cognitive & QoL benefits as well as cost-effectiveness
• Group CST: 14 sessions of themed activities, twice weekly
• Also maintenance & individual CST
• Used globally in at least 29 countries

“CST should routinely be given to people with early stage dementia”

“Offer group cognitive stimulation therapy to people living with mild to moderate dementia”

International development
https://www.ucl.ac.uk/international-cognitive-stimulation-therapy

**Principles & Themes**

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<th>Session Themes</th>
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<td>1 Physical games</td>
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<td>2 Sound</td>
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<td>4 Food</td>
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<td>5 Current affairs</td>
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<td>8 Being creative</td>
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<td>11 Using money</td>
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<td>13 Word game</td>
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<td>14 Team game</td>
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1. Mental Stimulation
2. New ideas, thought and associations
3. Using orientation, but sensitively and implicitly
4. Opinions, rather than facts
5. Using reminiscence, and as an aid to the here-and-now
6. Providing triggers to aid recall
7. Continuity & consistency between sessions
8. Implicit (rather than explicit) learning
9. Stimulating language
10. Stimulating executive functioning
11. Person-centred
12. Respect
13. Involvement
14. Inclusion
15. Choice
16. Fun
17. Maximising potential
18. Building / strengthening relationships
Project Background

- Planned before COVID-19 outbreak
- To cater for PwDs who cannot join CST groups physically (e.g., mobility, logistic challenges)
- To connect those with similar cultural background, language, interest beyond geographical boundaries
- Pilot stage: feasibility, acceptability, effectiveness & modification needs (e.g., smaller groups)
Preliminary Observations (I)

- No confusion in people with mild to moderate dementia
- Most without any ICT experience (e.g. a 92yo lady new to Zoom)
- Positive feedback from carers: improved mood
- Positive feedback from PwDs: “I feel like a celebrity!”
- Novel & empowering to master new technology
Preliminary Observations (II)

- Device set-up: carers need technical support & training
- Network requirement
- Hearing: mic set-up
- Attention/engagement level
- Shorter session (~30 mins): tiring for the eyes
- Facilitators: more challenging in managing online groups
Planned Design Modification

Can we re-create enjoyable social experience among PwDs online without physical interaction?

Can we make better use of technology in CST?

e.g. activity materials delivered before session; displayed during session

e.g. use of internet resources: Google Map for orientation; Wikipedia and other online educational materials
Next Steps

• Preparedness for future outbreaks needed
• An opportunity to address inequality in IT literacy & access (e.g., support for low-income families)
• Advocacy for recognition of e-health & e-mental health service by funding bodies (e.g., insurance)
• Participatory design & prototype testing
• Sharing among CST trainers & facilitators
• Hybrid online offline mode of delivery?
• Cross-territory connection: Hong Kong & Beijing
