

Making homes accessible through a wiki community

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Introduction - There is no system that coordinates home modification information. Such information evolves regularly and builds on personal and professional experiences. A coordinated system of information management requires contributions from consumers and service providers. In 2007, we convened focus groups involving clients and families, health professionals, managers and home design and modification service providers. This resulted in a resource binder on home accessibility, funding sources, design guidelines, standards and concepts and exemplars of universal design and visitability. The distribution and updating of these resources posed a challenge.

Objectives - The purpose was to create a wiki to share contents of the resource binder. The wiki allow would anyone to access, edit and update content.

Description - A Home Modification/Accessibility Steering Committee oversaw the development, funding and launching of the wiki site. Representatives were from Alberta Health Services (Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital & Home Care), the Seniors Association of Greater Edmonton, and Department of Occupational Therapy at the University of Alberta. Leaders in Universal Design, including an architect, industrial designer, and occupational therapists in the US and Australia served as special advisors. Two occupational therapy students carried out the work plan. Focus groups were held with clients, families, seniors, and health professionals (n=45). Participants addressed wiki's usability (readability, navigation, ability to edit and contribute) and content relevance.

Results - Participants' experience were positive and they provided constructive suggestions. Since the wiki was created in January 2009, the site logged 730 unique visitors, 60 regular users and over 1000 visits by April 8. As of April 30, the number of unique visitors increased to 936 and is expected to increase after a media launch in June. The ultimate success of the homeforlife.info wiki will depend on mass collaboration, i.e., contributions of clients, families, professionals, builders and other service providers.

Conclusion - Clients, professionals and service providers can use a wiki site as a community of practice on the topic of home accessibility.

Contribution to practice - This wiki site may help clients and families plan home modifications earlier, thereby shortening admission stay.