

COCARE-project Study 1:

Older adults' and healthcare professionals' opinions and requirements towards the COCARE-system – A focus group study

The first out of three studies within the COCARE-project could already be finished and the results are now ready for publication. This initial study aimed to analyze the needs and requirements of older adults and healthcare-professionals towards modern health-related technologies and home-based rehabilitation in general as well as specifically towards the COCARE-system.

It was carried out at three COCARE partner institutions: ETH (Switzerland), FDG (Italy) and Materia Agecare (Cyprus) and was based on so-called focus groups. Focus groups are a form a group-interview or group-discussion with a moderator using pre-defined guiding questions as a basis. The discussions were supplemented by questionnaires to ensure the integration of opinions of less talkative people as well. At every institution, 2 focus groups (one with older adults and one with healthcare professionals) with in total 34 participants were conducted.

At the beginning of each session, the current version of the COCARE-system (Senso and Senso Flex including a selection of exergames, assessment system, and rehabilitation cockpit) was presented to the participants before handing out the questionnaires and subsequently starting the focus group discussions.

Looking at the results, the focus groups turned out to be very productive and delivered comprehensive and interesting results. These were, in total, very positive. Contrary to general expectations, the older participants showed great interest in modern technologies. Thus, both older adults and healthcare professionals could imagine conducting a home-based rehabilitation program using the COCARE-system. They were especially motivated by the COCARE-system's entertainment component and by the possibility to independently determine training times. Besides, they expected the system to be very beneficial for older people's physical and cognitive health. However, they highlighted some requirements for using the COCARE-system. These are namely the need for further simplification of the system, personalization of the training, constant availability of a contact person, and comprehensive personal instructions for set-up and use. Besides, secondary end-users wished for a solution to reduce the risk of falls as the Senso Flex has no handrail and to counteract potential social isolation due to training at home.

All information is used to further adapt the system before testing it again in following studies.