THE PROBLEM: DEMENTIA
CAREGIVERS NEED SUPPORT

Millions of people provide care for people with dementia globally. Caregiving impacts are overwhelming: the deterioration of the caregiver’s physical and mental health, lost productivity as caregivers are forced to quit work, and staggering economic consequences, with informal care costs estimated at $252 billion worldwide in 2010. WHO, health agency responsible for providing leadership on global health matters, has partnered with international experts in caregiving and dementia to develop a comprehensive e-tool to enhance self-help, skills, and support for caregivers of people living with dementia, recognizing this urgent need.

OUR APPROACH: E-HEALTH

There is sufficient evidence that caregivers and people living with dementia benefit from interventions providing information, psychosocial support, and skills training. However, such services are not widely available or accessible. Caregivers need resources that are convenient, affordable, and engaging while minimizing service utilization obstacles such as access and transportation issues and stigma related to seeking treatment.

The world is aging more rapidly now than ever before

47.5 million people are estimated to be living with dementia; these figures will double by 2030 and triple by 2050
**OUR SOLUTION**

**iSupport**

*iSupport* as an e-Health solution aims to combine proven health interventions with the use of information and communication technologies, optimizing service delivery in a manner that is easily scalable.

*iSupport* includes education, skills training and social support that is integrated into, and implemented via, the existing health system in low- and middle-income countries. Content development, led by WHO with support from its international consortium, is evidence-based, respecting the dignity and human rights of people living with dementia and their caregivers.

*iSupport* is designed specifically to meet the needs of caregivers, but at the same time also those of people living with dementia. Ease of use and adaptability to different cultural settings are pivotal, while existing technical challenges such as infrastructure and low bandwidth in low- and middle-income countries are taken into account. Users can access the tool via the Internet using personal computers, tablets or smart phones, with features in place to ensure user privacy and confidentiality. Evaluation of *iSupport* is conducted specifically examining technical content, user satisfaction and effectiveness. Ultimately, the aspiration is to disseminate *iSupport* globally.

**OUR FEATURES**

**KEY INNOVATIVE FEATURES:**
- Comprehensive, accessible information
- High interactivity and attractiveness
- Modular self-help program
- Multi-lingual
- Culturally appropriate

*iSupport*’s training program contains modules on a range of topics related to self-care, as well as specific to caring for people living with dementia. Depending on their needs, caregivers learn about the basics of dementia, how to take on their role, how to cope with the emotional stress associated with caregiving, and the importance of self-care. Topics also include everyday care such as how to manage hygiene, to create an enjoyable mealtime, and to navigate the healthcare system. It also focuses on dealing with challenging behaviors associated with dementia, such as aggression, depression and wandering.

*iSupport* offers caregivers the opportunity to choose and plan their own lessons. The program provides personalized information and advice using graphics, and animations, accompanied by exercises with automated feedback, to create an interactive environment to hold the user’s attention and interest. The e-programme also offers other features like a mood meter. In next versions other features will be included as well, such as a forum to create virtual communities of caregivers: Caregiver Connect.

*WHO invites partners to contribute to the further development, dissemination and implementation of this project.*

**GOALS**

- Improve knowledge and caregiving skills to reduce stress and improve coping and mental health of caregivers of people living with dementia

**EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS FOR CAREGIVERS**

- Improved knowledge and skills
- Reduced stress and burden
- Improved mental health