

Review of: "Patient Positivity through Photos- What NHS Patients Really Think of Digital Healthcare"

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Potential competing interests: The author reports consultancy work for a digital health startup that does not impinge directly on this review.

The authors present a novel, and indeed somewhat artistic way of exploring user experiences during virtual consultations. While their quantitative and qualitative analyses are presented elsewhere, here they collate images that patients sent to the researchers in response to the question of How VC made them feel. Mainly, this is presented via a linked 4-minute video compilation of photos.

I commend the researchers on the creativity and emotional sensitivity required for such an approach to the research question. As their manuscript states, emotions are difficult to put into words. At the same time, they may be what makes or breaks the VC experience for service users.

A challenge is certainly the interpretation of their data/photos, not least due to the heterogeneity of images, individual differences in what emotions are evoked by or attached to individual images (a salmon on a bike?!), and/or the questionable seriousness of some of the consignments (a decorated sweet potato?!). Interestingly, however, in the authors interpretation, overall the photos match the main themes of their earlier qualitative study. The authors back up this hypothesis with interview quotes.

Unfortunately, the paper is rather short. More information may be required on how the researchers grouped and assigned meaning to the photos. A brief discussion of benefits and challenges of this method, potentially also in the context of comparable research endeavours, could have added value. Similarly, more nuanced discussions of the photo categories and potential outliers would have been interesting.

Overall, this is certainly interesting and novel research, encouraging for staff and service users of VCs in its outcomes. With a little more depth and transparency in the analysis methods, the insights provided by this creative research design could go a long way. I am glad the authors published these data and thank them for their work.