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Virtual Engagement Rehabilitation Assistant (VERA) in the community

Submission date
23/01/2025

Recruitment status
Recruiting

Registration date
05/03/2025

Overall study status
Ongoing

Last Edited
11/07/2025

Condition category
Nervous System Diseases

[X] Prospectively registered
[X] Protocol
[_] Statistical analysis plan
[_] Results
[_] Individual participant data
[X] Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
The Virtual Engagement Rehabilitation Assistant (VERA) is a new digital tool designed to help patients with their rehabilitation goals. VERA provides access to personalized resources like exercise videos, appointment reminders, well-being questionnaires, and more. This study aims to evaluate how well VERA works in community rehabilitation settings for people with neurological conditions.

Who can participate?
Up to 20 patients receiving neurological community rehabilitation will be invited to participate. Additionally, up to 20 staff members from the rehabilitation teams will also be invited to take part.

What does the study involve?
Participants will use VERA on an iPad for up to six weeks as part of their rehabilitation. They will receive training on how to use VERA and will have access to personalized resources provided by their rehabilitation team. Data collected will include demographic information, health and well-being measures, and feedback on the VERA training. At the end of the six weeks, participants will take part in a semi-structured interview.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
Participants may benefit from having easy access to personalized rehabilitation resources, which could support their recovery. There are minimal risks involved, mainly related to the time commitment required for training and using VERA.

Where is the study run from?
The study is being conducted by the University of Central Lancashire in collaboration with the Lancashire and South Cumbria Foundation Trust and Liverpool University Hospitals Foundation Trust.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
February 2024 to January 2026

Who is funding the study?
NIHR Health Technology Assessment programme (UK)

Who is the main contact?
Dr Kathryn Jarvis, KJarvis1@uclan.ac.uk

Study website
https://veratechnology.myportfolio.com/

Contact information

Type(s)
Public, Scientific, Principal Investigator

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Dr Kathryn Jarvis

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Additional identifiers

EudraCT/CTIS number
Nil known

IRAS number
330807

ClinicalTrials.gov number
Nil known

Secondary identifying numbers
CPMS 65108, NIHR153944

Study information

Scientific Title
Acceptability and usability of the Virtual Engagement Rehabilitation Assistant (VERA) for community-based neurological rehabilitation

Acronym

VERA in the community

Study objectives
The objectives are:
1. To identify and engage with Virtual Engagement Rehabilitation Assistant (VERA) stakeholders in a community-based setting.
2. To complete the Health Equalities Assessment Tool in collaboration with community stakeholders and undertake identified actions to promote equality of access to and use of VERA during the intervention.
3. To review, prioritise and undertake changes identified in the first VERA (inpatient setting) study to refine the VERA Intervention in preparation for the current study.
4. To utilise findings from Work streams 1 and 2 to modify the VERA Intervention for a community-based neurorehabilitation setting.
5. To implement the VERA Intervention in two community-based neurological rehabilitation services.

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 03/12/2024, North West - Preston Research Ethics Committee (2 Redman Place, Stratford, London, E20 1JQ, United Kingdom; -; preston.rec@hra.nhs.uk), ref: 24/NW/0321

Study design
Interventional non-randomised qualitative

Primary study design
Interventional

Secondary study design
Non randomised study

Study setting(s)
Community

Study type(s)
Quality of life, Treatment

Participant information sheet
See outputs table

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Neurological rehabilitation

Interventions
Following consent, and collection of demographic information, service users will be invited to take part in the following:
1. Training to learn how to use VERA.
2. Completion of a questionnaire (approximately 10 minutes top complete) to help explore their response to this training
3. Completion of six quantitative measures before using VERA (approximately 35 minutes to

complete all six questionnaires): Short-form 36 (SF-36), Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9), Perceived Health Competence Scale (PHCS), Six Item Cognitive Impairment Test (6-CIT), Occupational Self-assessment-Short-form (OSA-SF), Modified Rankin Score (MRS)
4. Use of a VERA Unit for up to six weeks to use within their rehabilitation.
5. On completion of the use of VERA, an interview of up to 60 minutes, which will be conducted online, or face-to-face if this is preferred.
6. Completion of the six quantitative measures after using VERA: SF-36, PHQ-9, PHCS,6-CIT, OSA-SF, MRS.
7. Debrief

In addition, clinical staff will provide the number of goals set and completed by each participating service user during their time with a VERA Unit. Usage data will also be collected.

Staff working with the service users who have been allocated a VERA Unit will be invited to participate in the study. Up to 10 staff participants from each community neurological rehabilitation service will, following consent and collection of demographic information, will be invited to undertake the following:
1. Training to learn how to use VERA.
2. Completion of a questionnaire to help explore their response to this training
3. Contribute to a focus group of up to 90 minutes (one for each community neurological rehabilitation service). The Focus Group Discussion will be conducted face-to-face if infection control measures and research partner protocols enable face-to-face focus groups. Otherwise they will be conducted online. These groups will take place at a time and venue convenient to the staff.

Intervention Type
Other

Phase
Not Specified

Primary outcome measure
A framework analysis (Ritchie and Spencer 1994) will be used to analyse the data collected
1. Qualitative component: Exploration of the acceptability, feasibility and usability, and information about who may gain benefit/disbenefit from VERA measured using training questionnaires, service-user interviews and the staff focus groups during the intervention
1.1. Experience of receiving training to use VERA
1.2. Experiences of using VERA
1.3. Facilitators and barriers to using VERA
2. Qualitative component: Overall total number of minutes of VERA usage recorded at 6 weeks; Timepoint(s): Post-intervention (6 weeks)

Secondary outcome measures
There are no secondary outcome measures

Overall study start date
01/02/2024

Completion date
31/01/2026

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
Service user participants will be eligible for inclusion if they:
1. are receiving, or are on a waiting list to receive, rehabilitation to address the impact of a neurological condition.
2. have rehabilitation goals that a therapist identifies can be addressed through the VERA intervention.
3. have communication that supports effective use of the VERA Unit, either independently or with additional equipment/support. Where an individual has a communication impairment, this will be assessed by a speech and language therapist.
4. are able to understand written English language, or have daily access to someone to offer translation support, as VERA is currently only available in the English language.

Staff participants will be included if they:
1. are a member of the allied health professional staff, either a qualified professional or staff working in a support role.
2. have worked in their professional capacity with service users who have been allocated a VERA Unit during the implementation phase.

Participant type(s)
Patient

Age group
Adult

Lower age limit
18 Years

Sex
Both

Target number of participants
Planned Sample Size: 40; UK Sample Size: 40

Key exclusion criteria
Service users will be excluded if they:
1. do not have mental capacity to engage in the study. This will be assessed through discussion between the service user, the clinical team and the researchers and, where permission is given, with participant-identified family and friends. This discussion will be based on the five principles of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 Code of Practice (Department for Constitutional Affairs 2007). Individuals will be provided with every support possible to consider their involvement in the study (and their subsequent use of VERA) and to make a decision based on the information provided.
2. are under 18 years of age.

Staff participants will be excluded if they:
1. spend less than seven hours a week working with service users within the community neurological rehabilitation service.
2. are under 18 years of age.

Date of first enrolment
21/07/2025

Date of final enrolment
31/10/2025

Locations

Countries of recruitment
England

United Kingdom

Study participating centre
Lancashire & South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust
Sceptre Point
Sceptre Way
Bamber Bridge
Preston
United Kingdom
PR5 6AW

Study participating centre
Liverpool University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Royal Liverpool University Hospital
Prescot Street
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Sponsor information

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University of Central Lancashire

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Sponsor type
University/education

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ROR
https://ror.org/010jbqd54

Funder(s)

Funder type
Government

Funder Name
NIHR Evaluation, Trials and Studies Co-ordinating Centre (NETSCC)

Results and Publications

Publication and dissemination plan
On completion of the study, all efforts will be made to publish the findings, which will ensure the information is available in a peer-reviewed journal.

It will be possible to access the Executive Summary of the full study report by contacting the Chief Investigator. It will also be available on the VERA website and will be stored on the University of Central Lancashire Online Knowledge (CLoK) repository, to enable open access.

In a debrief at the end of the study, service user participants will be advised how they can access the Executive Summary. They will also be asked if they would like to be involved in dissemination opportunities, including conference presentations. Where a participant indicates interest, they will be asked to supply an email address or telephone number to enable future contact.

A lay summary of the findings will be available after completion of the study. All patient participants will be informed of this via the Participant Information Sheet and Debrief, and will have the option to consent to receive this by email in due course.

Intention to publish date

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
The anonymised, analysis of the interviews and focus groups during the current study will be available upon request from Kathryn Jarvis: KJarvis1@uclan.ac.uk. This analysis will be available once the Executive Summary has been published. We do not have consent from participants to share data for other research.

IPD sharing plan summary

Available on request

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Participant information sheet	Service user version 3	14/12/2024	04/03/2025	No	Yes
Participant information sheet	Staff version 3	14/12/2024	04/03/2025	No	Yes
Protocol file	version 3	14/12/2024	04/03/2025	No	No