

SRES[®] MARKETPLACE

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Transformative Potential of Wearable Technology for Seniors

So often, older adults' ability to remain out of an institutional setting and age in place at home hinges on ensuring their safety and monitoring their health and well-being.

In the coming years, advances in wearable technology may boost seniors' chances of living at home longer.

Laurie M. Orlov, the principal analyst at Aging and Health Technology Watch, looked at where the wearables market stands in her report (<https://bit.ly/2RT3wkH>) "The Future of Wearables and Older Adults 2021."

Thanks to technologies like smartwatches that track fitness, sleep, and other conditions, people have gotten familiar and comfortable with wearable devices. According to the Consumer Technology Association, consumers are increasingly interested in tracking blood pressure, heart health, and blood sugar levels.

In fact, 66% of those who started using a wearable did so to manage a diagnosed health condition, with more than 51% of wearables owners using such devices to address a diagnosed health condition, says Rock Health.

Wearables have the potential to monitor a slew of health conditions and share that data with healthcare providers. That said, doctors remain cautious and skeptical about such

devices and resistant to integrating data from wearables directly into the health system.

In her report, Orlov points out that "Wearables can augment and potentially inform the annual checkup. Instead of the one-time annual blood pressure check, perhaps elevated in the presence of a nurse, monitoring blood pressure at home provides a level of accuracy that could help avoid over-medicating. Instead of periodic finger sticks to determine blood sugar levels, a blood sugar patch can indicate both the impact of certain foods and provide a timely warning."

Some ideas and questions from the report:

Could wearables be used to predict strokes based on a person's motion changes before they occur? Or guide a Parkinson's patient to get a new prescription based on gait changes? In addition, tracking and notification technologies could be used to alert caregivers of an emergency.

Some challenges around the adoption and rollout of wearables include accuracy of measurements, the healthcare industry embracing and integrating data from wearables, privacy concerns, and people's willingness and ability to use them.

Still, research, innovation, and funding in the wearables field plow forward, and the devices might be the thing that helps seniors live healthier lives and live those lives in the comfort of their own homes.

Post-COVID Care Models: Better Alternatives to Nursing Homes

Because of the immense number of COVID-19 deaths in nursing homes last year, we're all reevaluating how we care for seniors.

It's something Bill Thomas, a geriatrician, has been thinking about since the early 1990s. That's when he met and talked with an older woman who was living in a nursing home.

Though the facility's staff did the job of feeding, sheltering, and medicating her, she said she was lonely and hadn't made any meaningful human connections.

Thomas thought there were better solutions. His idea: deinstitutionalization.

His story and vision were covered in a recent *Politico* story, "Will the Nursing Home of the Future be an Actual Home?"

According to the piece, Thomas envisions something other than the traditional nursing home setting to care for aging adults.

Why not build clusters of ADA-accessible homes – small granny flats – around communal green spaces and give people their own homes, close-by neighbors, access to the outdoors, and greater autonomy?

Access to care – physical therapy, help with household and personal tasks, and nursing services – could be brought to residents.

Such a strategy makes for a healthier environment than an institutional setting. It also has the potential to bring a greater quality of life and better address people's physical, social, and emotional needs.

Challenges to bring the concept to market include making it accessible to middle-income people, entirely revamp how we care for seniors, and change how care is paid for.

The concept is gaining traction.

For instance, plans are in the works to test the model with Signature HealthCare, a long-term care provider, and the idea has caught the attention of thought leaders in the long-term care world.

Read more at: <https://bit.ly/35oM0YA>

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IS THE AIR IN YOUR HOME SAFE?



According to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Americans spend approximately 90% of their time indoors. That percentage is even higher for older individuals.

For decades, indoor air quality has been a health issue. In 1987, the EPA estimated that some pollutants are often two to five times higher indoors than outdoors. More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has elevated concerns about indoor air hygiene.

Monitoring Indoor Air Quality

New technology allows individuals to monitor and address the quality of air in their homes. This is particularly important for people with respiratory or cardiac conditions.

Until recently, most efforts to measure and alter indoor air related to climate—controlling the temperature and humidity. Now, smart homes can be outfitted with sensors to detect and measure airborne particulates like oxygen, carbon dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide, dust, and more.

Some units can measure humidity and identify conditions that encourage mold growth, while others can detect radon.

Challenges

While some monitors are stand-alone devices, others can be incorporated into smart-home systems.

The market for these devices is still developing, and the particulates monitored vary wildly, as do the price of the units. None have sensors for all potentially harmful particulates, so the device(s) you select should simultaneously address your specific air quality concerns and your budget.

Cleaning the Air in Your Home

Selecting air purification products can also be challenging.

There are single-room air purifiers and whole-house systems. You can also select from manually operated units or units designed to automatically turn on when specific air quality parameters

are reached in a smart-home environment.

Some units use activated carbon and HEPA filters, while others effectively and safely use contained UV light to kill bacteria and viruses from the air, similar to UV sterilization robots used in hospital settings.

What About Outdoor Air Pollution?

Sometimes, indoor air quality can be improved with better ventilation and air exchange. But what if opening your windows will degrade the quality air in your home?

Outdoor air conditions can be tracked online at airnow.gov. Some smartphone weather apps incorporate similar data. Additionally, some indoor air quality monitors include internet-based reports on the quality of air in your area from the device's screen or an app interface.

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