

Health Information Compliance Alert

Information Technology Trends: Seniors Look to Technology to Help Them Remain at Home

Usability, affordability, and availability of technical support are keys to success.

Older adults want to use technology so they can age safely in their home - and family caregivers are hopeful that technology can ease some of their challenges, according to two recent studies. But concerns such as cost to install and maintain equipment remain barriers for both people 65-plus and their caregivers.

The **AARP Foundation** commissioned a report which examined the attitudes of people 65-plus and of caregivers towards technology. Seniors and caregivers are willing to try technology like home security services, sensors to detect falls and devices to regulate temperature, lights, and appliances, but cost remains the biggest hurdle. Seventy-five percent of caregivers and 80 percent of those 65-plus are only willing to pay \$50 or less per month for the service.

There is also a conflicting perspective between caregivers and those likely to need care. People 65-plus report a high willingness to use technology, but more than eight in 10 caregivers believe they would have difficulty convincing those they care for to adopt technology.

But large majorities of both caregivers and potential care recipients believe technology would make them feel safer and provide peace of mind for families and friends.

A second study by the Center for Aging Services Technologies of the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging lays out the categories of technologies that exist to ease the burden of caregiving for informal and paid caregivers. These include:

- Sensors that can detect and notify a caregiver if a person being cared for does not get out of his chair or turn off the stove.
- Health technologies that can monitor blood pressure, respiration, and other conditions in real time while the person is at home, reducing the need for doctor's visits and notifying caregivers immediately of significant changes.
- Medication dispensers that provide the appropriate medicines at the appropriate time and remind a person being cared for to take them.
- Computer games that provide social networking, brain stimulation, and even monitoring of cognitive abilities through the use of diagnostic games.

The CAST study found that factors ranging from interconnectivity between different systems to usability, affordability, and the availability of technical support and training will determine how widespread aging services technologies can become.