

Addressing the needs of older adults through technology: the unique focus of the International Society for Gerontechnology.

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Introduction: The care of the world's aging population increasingly challenges nations whose working-age populations have shrunken due to declining fertility rates and where improvements in medical care have resulted in an inverted pyramid with many more older adults to care for, than hands to perform the work. Technology proffers solutions to the healthcare labor shortage via tele-health, tele-care and remote monitoring. As well, environmental enhancements such as smart homes, smart cars, and robotics allow older adults to remain independent and age in place much longer, thereby delaying transition into more expensive long-term care.

The International Society for Gerontechnology's (ISG) mission is to foster development of technologies to help people live well and to a great age. Older adults represent a large and growing market for new technologies to address their needs and desires, especially in the rapidly developing Asian marketplace. In the West new federal policies embracing reindustrialization could potentially trigger significant economic development in this sector.

Method: We contend that developers possessing deep understanding of their customers' requirements and desires design superior products and services. ISG's members bring multidisciplinary expertise spanning architecture, computer science, engineering, medicine, nursing, and rehabilitation, and the social and behavioral sciences; they actively contribute to best practices that inform industry and healthcare policymakers through the society's peer-reviewed journal "Gerontechnology", biennial world conferences, and the activities of its chapters.

Results: In our presentation we will define ISG's goals and organizational structure, outreach and advocacy activities, and describe its roles in worldwide research and educational efforts to

provide improved healthcare and living environments for older adults. Its student mentorship and Masterclass program will also be described as well as planned activities of the affiliated World Academy of Gerontechnology.

Discussion: Multi-disciplinary NGOs focused on aging and the aged such as the ISG, the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics of which it is a part, and others such as IFA have an important role to play in bridging the silos that characterize many government, professional and disease-related organizations. Joint awareness-raising, advocacy, research and/or educational activities would increase critical mass and bring serious attention to seniors' issues on the world stage. However, this requires a clear understanding of the common and also the unique attributes of each participating organization. This presentation highlights the attributes of ISG and is designed to stimulate dialogue on potential mutual activities.