Abstract

Promoting Healthy Aging in a Digital World

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Abstract

Background: The aging of the population is a global phenomenon, with growing numbers of persons over the age of 65 years, greater diversity of aging societies, and fewer younger people available to provide care and support for older adults. At the same time, enabling technology offers new solutions for aging well, including self-management of chronic conditions, communication with family and the health care team, passive monitoring, and enriching the home and community environments.

Objective: This keynote address highlights the demand characteristics for healthy aging and identifies potential solutions and challenges with enabling technology.

Methods: This presentation is based on literature review and engagement with diverse scientific collaborators.

Results: Major societal trends include the following: the growth of the older population with associated increases in the prevalence of chronic conditions and functional and cognitive disability; increased demand for both health and social services; increased demands on family caregivers at a time when there are fewer caregivers available; explosion of health information and desire to self-manage chronic conditions while remaining at home; widespread workforce shortages; and escalating costs of care. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the urgency of these demands and exacerbated health needs and workforce shortages while accelerating systematic change to address emergent challenges. New solutions are required to promote health, well-being, and health equity that entail both care model redesign and deployment of enabling technology. Optimal care for the future will place the older adult at the center; assure that information is available to all for good decision-making; and deploy human resources in the most effective way possible, providing the right person at the right time for the right task.

Conclusions: Technology has the potential to collect and make meaningful use of everyday data to inform plans for care; engage and optimize communication among the older adult, family, and care team; and enhance function and well-being. Actualizing this future requires appropriate policy, training, and leadership.

Conflicts of Interest: None declared.

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technology; mobile health; mHealth; sensors; older adults; healthy aging

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