

# Using technology to help the elderly: ipad apps

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The Yale Medical Group explains that " People who continue to maintain close friendships and find other ways to interact socially live longer than those who become isolated" .

On the Yale Medical Group Website, there is the following advice to elderly people: " although staying in touch in person is important, phone calls, snail mail, and e-mail can keep you connected, too? if you're to yet comfortable with computers, ask a young relative to help you. " 2 The last piece of this advice will become less and less relevant over the next 20 years. As the baby boomers retire, they will be the first generation of computer literate elderly.

This generation of retirees will be more likely to keep in touch with families and friends via keep, email, twitter and other online technologies than any previous generation. The opportunity: With longer life expectancies, there will be a growing Incidence of old people with hearing and sight Impairments that make It difficult for them to use conventional electronic devices:

Growing incidence of deafness: A study by the National Institute of Deafness in the US estimates that " 17 percent (36 million) of American adults report some degree of hearing loss. 3 The incidence of deafness will likely grow with increased life expectancies: while 30 % of Americans aged 65-75 report hearing loss, this increases to 47% of Americans over the age of 75. 4

Incidence of blindness: The American Institute for the Blind recently released a Special Report on Aging and Vision Loss. Currently vision loss affects 12% of Americans aged 65 to 74 years, and 5% of Americans over 75. "... The trend is expected to continue to grow significantly as the baby boom generation continues to age.

Experts predict that by 2030, rates of vision loss will double along with the country's aging population. " 5 The solution: Technologies exist to allow easier communication for older people with vision and hearing impairments: For early stage visual impairment: more powerful backlogging options with bigger buttons For later stage visual impairment: word to voice technology so emails and other written communication can be read aloud to the user

For early stage hearing impairment: specialist sound technology designed to work with hearing-aids for improved keep calling and video watching For later stage hearing impairment: voice to word technology so that keep calls can be translated into text, and youth videos can have subtitles These technologies are already being used in specialist products: for example, the " ensemble" phone with voice to text capability was released earlier this year. 6 However old people don't want to be classed as disabled and have to use devices that are big and ugly.

Elderly consumers of the future will want to continue using existing communication products, just with better functionality as their eyesight and hearing deteriorates. Apple is great at designing communication devices that are easy to use and have great functionality, of this growing demography. Fortunately, through the App Store, Apple has left the door open for software developers to take advantage of this unique opportunity. Apple should think about adapting the iPad for one of the fastest growing user groups of the future: older people with vision and hearing impairments.