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Is technology the solution or a hindrance? Preventing elderly people from falling?

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In the Netherlands falling is the highest cause of deadly accidents for elderly people over 65 years. Every year one in three seniors, aged 65 years and older have to be treated in Accident and Emergency, because of a fall.

At the moment much attention is directed to the elderly who have already experienced a fall while living in residential care. More can be gained by investment in the prevention of accidents for the elderly living at home.It is known that extrinsic factors barely influence the risk of falling. In this poster the intrinsic factors that cause the risk of falling are identified, addition to the technological solutions to the problem.

ObjectivesThe target group is a selection of 600 elderly people living in their own homes in the south of the Netherlands. In this research protocol the first identification comes from the physiotherapist who suggests a closer screening on the risk of falling. Further research with occupational therapy students was undertaken on the following issues: Are people willing to accept technology like monitoring their daily patterns of movement, accepting devices in their life like the Nintendo WII for promotion of mobility.

This research is carried out via the research centre within the Zuyd University of Higher Professional Education. It is part of a regional consortium actioned to improve the research competencies of students and teachers.

Results

A flowchart/toolbox was developed. By using this flowchart elderly people can predict their personal risk-profile and choose the technological solutions regarding the prevention of falls. The results can be directly translated to the occupational curriculum with resulting benefits or the elderly living at home.

Contribution to practice The technological appliances have to be innovative, but also easy to use in the daily life of this elderly group in order to advance social participation. The appliances must also be accessible and available at a reasonable cost. Furthermore this poster may be the way to stimulate people to take up exercise.

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