CENTER FOR TECHNOLOGY AND AGING BRIEF REVIEWS
TECHNOLOGIES THAT IMPROVE CHRONIC CARE AND
HELP OLDER ADULTS MAINTAIN INDEPENDENCE

Technologies That Benefit Seniors Could Save Billions Annually

OAKLAND, Calif., Aug. 18, 2009 – The Center for Technology and Aging has released "Technologies To Help Older Adults Maintain Independence: Advancing Technology Adoption," a briefing paper that describes seven technology areas with significant potential of improving chronic health care and increasing the independence of older adults, while reducing health care costs.

"Spending on hospitalizations and chronic care management now exceeds $500 billion per year, representing over 75 percent of all U.S. health care costs", said David Lindeman, PhD, Director of the Center for Technology and Aging. "As a nation we must rapidly accelerate the use of technologies as a means to reduce the cost of health care, while at the same time improving care"

The Center conducts research and grant-making activities, which support the adoption and diffusion of technologies that help seniors lead healthier lives and enable them to remain in their communities. The briefing paper focuses on areas that are ready for expansion, including two technology areas for the Center's first round of grant making -- remote patient monitoring and medication optimization. The Center will release its first request for proposals in September.

"As the nation focuses on health care reform, it is essential to address the societal costs of chronic illness among older adults," said Molly Joel Coye, MD, MPH, Chairperson of the Center's National Advisory Board. "Without more rapid dissemination of these important technologies – along with reimbursement reform – it will be difficult to meet the nation's health care quality and cost containment goals."

The discussion of each technology area includes an overview, review of current applications, and an assessment of future opportunities. The focus areas are:

Medication Optimization - technologies designed to help manage medication information, dispensing, adherence, and tracking.

Remote Patient Monitoring - technologies designed to manage and monitor a range of health conditions.

Assistive Technologies - devices and equipment that help individuals perform a task or prevent injury.

Remote Training and Supervision - technologies used to train and supervise health and long-term care workers, and the potential for continuing education and quality assurance.

Disease Management - patient-centric, coordinated care processes for patients with chronic conditions and conditions that have a significant self-care component.

Cognitive Fitness and Assessment - technologies that measure cognition or include cognitive practice regimens.

Social Networking - technologies that enable the building of communities of interest that help older adults communicate, organize, and share with other older adults and care providers.

The brief describes key factors contributing to the public health challenges of curbing long-term care costs and minimizing the burden of disease and disability for the aging population:

- Demographics: The population of Americans aged 65 and older will double during the next 25 years and account for roughly 20% of the total population.

- Epidemiology: The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that approximately 80% of older Americans have at least one chronic condition and 50% have at least two.

- Economics: Per person personal health care spending for the 65 and older population was $14,797 in 2004, 3.3 times higher than the spending per working-age person.

- Workforce: In the next decade, home and community-based long-term care providers will face a shortage of direct care workers.

The full briefing paper is available for free download at
http://www.techandaging.org/briefingpaper.pdf

The *Center for Technology and Aging* is devoted to helping California and the nation more rapidly implement technologies that improve home and community-based care for seniors. Through research, grants, public policy involvement, and development of practical implementation tools, the Center serves as a resource for all those seeking to improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of long-term care services. It was established in 2009 with a generous grant from The SCAN Foundation (www.thescanfoundation.org) and is located at the Public Health Institute (www.phi.org) in Oakland, CA.

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