

# How You'll Care For Your Parents In the Future

By Shawn DuBravac and Steve Ewell



**Chances are, your parents are more technologically aware than any previous generation and technology is going to define the relationship you have with them throughout their golden years.**

Sure, most of them aren't sending you snaps (yet) but they are increasingly comfortable navigating the digital realm. They may not sleep with their phones under their pillows or keep up with the latest emoticons but they are bridging the digital and physical worlds better than any prior generation at their age.

At the same time, however, the population of the United States is aging quickly. We're living longer than at any other time in history. Today, there are more seniors living in the U.S. than at any other time in history. In the 1930s, a little more than five percent of the population was over 50 years of age; today, it's 34 percent.

According to research from the Consumer Technology Association (CTA), the U.S. market for active-aging technology now encompasses 85 million Americans, including seniors and caregivers. That's more than one-quarter of the national population.

**The ranks of seniors** are growing faster than younger populations, raising the median age in the United States to 37. At the same time, there are now more millennials than baby boomers. These two trends will collide head-on in the years to come with massive implications for both you and your parents.

You and your parents may have more in common than you think. You value independence. You want answers and solutions and are willing to turn to technology for help.

You see the wide array of benefits of technologies. While you live very different lives, you and your parents are straddling a world increasingly defined by both the physical world in which we live, and the digital world, in which a growing share of services and offerings exist.

**Imagine a scenario** in which your mom wakes up in her own home and goes about her daily routine. You get a regular morning notification that she took her medications but by midday you notice something is amiss. You share an ongoing Fitbit challenge with each other and you see her activity levels from the past few days are well below her norms.

You give her a call and cut through the "Oh, nothing's wrong!" banter to discover that she fell a few days earlier and was putting off going to the hospital.

You jump on the phone to schedule an appointment with Teladoc which determines she should get X-rays. You schedule her an appointment via Zocdoc and order her an Uber (or an autonomous car in the future). Her doctor accesses her complete medical history via her electronic health records even before he sees her.

The X-rays are negative for broken bones and the doctor encourages her to take it easy for a few days. You couldn't meet her at the doctor's office but she reluctantly dialed you in. As the Uber takes her home, you order her dinner via GrubHub. As you walk into your own home that evening after work, you find your daughter on Skype with your mom who joins you remotely as you sit down for a family dinner. She's healthier and you're happier without ever seeing each other in person during this process.

We're making steady progress toward a more seamless remote care experience. Technology provides exponentially better access, immediacy and transparency throughout the process. If your parents are like our parents, they don't want to be burdensome. Technology solves this. We can stay informed without being invasive.

Our parents aren't used to sharing everything and being monitored in real time. But these systems grant our parents control over what information is shared and with whom, and over time, they'll see that continuous monitoring behind the scenes will minimize their time in hospitals and doctor offices.

**The cost** of these technologies and services is small compared with needing to move into more advanced care, especially when you consider the peace of mind and independence of remaining at home.

Of course, face-to-face exchanges triumph over digital dialogue every time. But we can't always be there in person and our parents don't expect us to be. So text your mom, tell her you love her and that you care about her well-being — in both the real world and the virtual world.

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