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2020

Senior Care During COVID-19



REPORT BACKGROUND

We will be examining the silent but deadly mental health crisis affecting seniors and plot a way forward to combat some of the symptoms using gaming technology.

1. STUDY OVERVIEW

Snapshot of the research

2. THE UNIQUE CHALLENGE

Understanding the daunting crisis afflicting society's most vulnerable

3. A CHANGING SENIOR DEMOGRAPHIC

New habits mean new hope for change

4. THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY

Our findings on the impact of tech in assisted living facilities based on original survey data

5. OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE

A way forward to address senior challenges during COVID-19

REPORT METHODOLOGY

This report takes a comprehensive approach to some of the issues seniors face during the COVID-19 pandemic, with particular focus on assisted living facilities. First, it explores the backdrop of the issue on a macro level by delving into relevant data, then dives into original assisted living insights. Finally, the report zooms back out to place those insights within the broader context of the industry and plots a way forward in a manner meant to provide insights to the casual observer and actionable information to those in charge of assisted living facilities.

1 STUDY OVERVIEW

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought with it obvious problems of rising death tolls, long term physical health issues, and economic hardship. However, the rampant but often overlooked toll on mental health remains invisible, especially when it comes to particularly vulnerable groups such as seniors.

Our goal is to better understand how to address these mental health challenges here and now, while instituting recommendations to remedy lasting mental effects and related daily challenges long after the pandemic is over.

To accomplish that goal, a study was conducted in November 2020 across over a dozen care facilities in the tri-state area. Those surveyed were caregivers and senior management at care facilities who are on the front lines of elder care and have unparalleled viewpoints of the pandemic's effect on senior residents. The data was compiled by Obie, an EyeClick company that provides a user-friendly and interactive gaming system for all ages and interests that works on motion detection and projection onto existing surfaces.

The changing backdrop and breakdown of the problems faced, along with some of the key insights gained from the research is outlined in the following pages.



2 THE UNIQUE CHALLENGE

As early as May, the stats were out and the headlines abundant: "Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Facilities Account for 42% of COVID-19 Deaths" and stories of deadly nursing home tragedies still, rightfully so, gain plenty of attention.

Yet, the single-minded focus of much of the spotlight has ignored an equally dire set of challenges - loneliness, depression, and cognitive decline.

As one medical professional eloquently summed it up:

"The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the mental health of residents in two fundamental ways; directly through infection, and indirectly, but more insidiously, through social isolation and other psychological stresses."

According to Alison Bryant, Ph.D., senior vice-president of research for AARP, the latter issue of isolation "has a profound negative effect on health and wellbeing — as much as smoking 15 cigarettes a day".

While the makeshift remedy for most of us has been connecting on Zoom and other social media, seniors often have trouble with the technical platforms which were not designed with them in mind and often leave them feeling more isolated from not being able to operate the technology.

3 TECH AND THE SENIOR DEMOGRAPHIC

Seniors want to use technology - but it's not designed for them

Despite **70% of seniors being online**, according to the World Economic Forum, tech adoption by adults aged 60 and above is slow and frustrating. In a study, Pew Research found that low technology literacy, including **lack of familiarity with tech terminology, as well as physical challenges** that can make adoption difficult, are the biggest barriers to seniors' adoption of new technology.

The need for it and the want is there, though. The research, titled *Tech Adoption Among Older Adults*, shows that 58% of adults aged 65 and above say technology has had a mostly positive impact on society, while roughly three-quarters of internet-using seniors say they go online on a daily basis.

While studies have shown that older adults could use well-designed technologies in their daily lives, few have addressed user-related issues in their design processes. Effective technologies are going to be “those that **prioritize the needs and wishes of older adults**, general acceptance of potential users, and suitable preconditions for its adoption”.

This is why technology that is to be successfully adopted by senior citizens needs to be designed with them in mind and with their best interests in **usability, dexterity, and simplicity**.

4 THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY

Caregivers in assisted living facilities are on the front lines when it comes to combatting senior residents' loneliness, depression, and cognitive decline.

They have a complex job supporting residents' diverse needs, both physically and emotionally. The pandemic has added many new challenges to this role, with an emphasis on keeping the people they care for healthy, and the resources COVID-free, but still filling the days and months with meaning. These workers saw a significant decline in residents' quality of life and emotional wellbeing, despite the option of online calls, and communication and relationships were hindered by quarantine and isolation.

Obie for Seniors, a smart projector gaming technology, represents an important case study vis-a-vis the impact of promising new solutions specifically designed for seniors and tailored to have an impact against some of the difficulties that COVID-19 presented.

After deploying Obie for Seniors across nearly two dozen Complete Care Management facilities in the Northeast United States, we gathered data from those dealing directly with both the issues at hand and the technology on their observations of any impact that the tech has for seniors, along with their opinions regarding the future of such technologies.

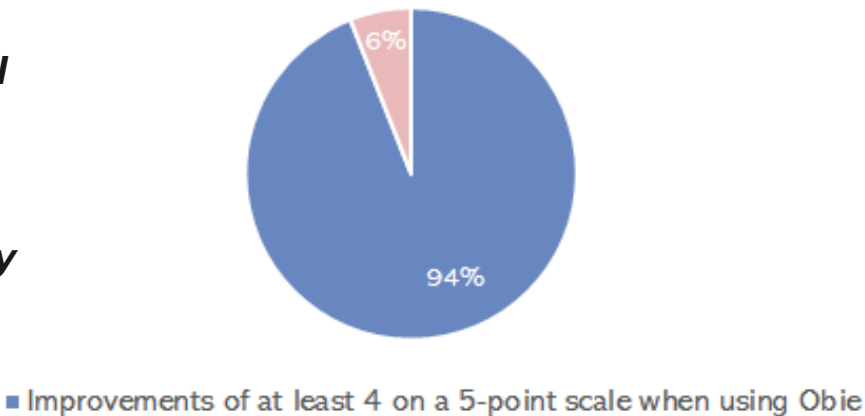


The results indicated an overwhelmingly positive impact of Obie, and the vast potential of gaming tech for seniors

4. A TECH TRANSFORMATION: IMPACT ANALYSIS

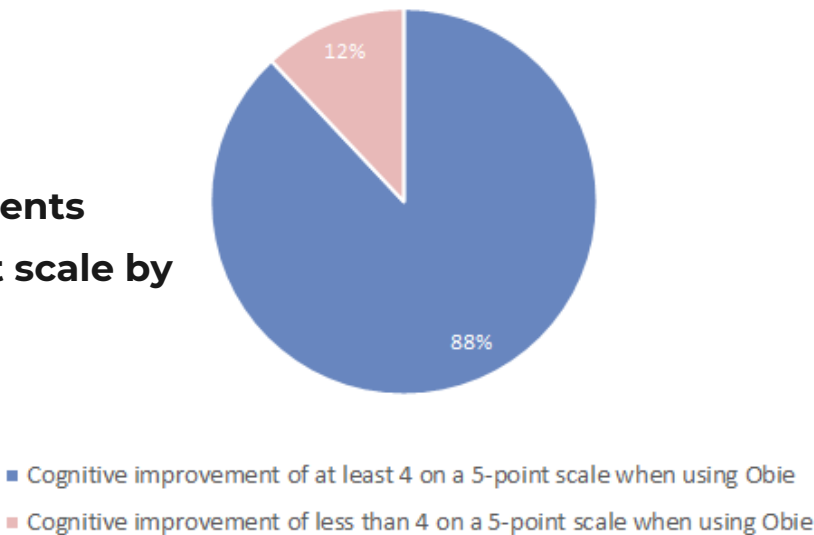
In this survey, A solid majority **of respondents (57%) reported that residents' wellbeing declined with the start of COVID-19**. This is especially alarming as many residents faced significant challenges to begin with even without the virus' threat.

The technology made a difference: **94% of respondents saw general improvements in residents of at least 4 on a 5-point scale when they began using Obie**. A full 57% observed a 5/5 improvement.



Residents are more social. **85% of respondents observed a 4-point + improvement in residents' social behavior on a five-point scale**. With loneliness as one of the primary afflictions of the pandemic, this type of change holds much promise.

Residents' cognitive improvements were rated a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale by 88% of respondents.

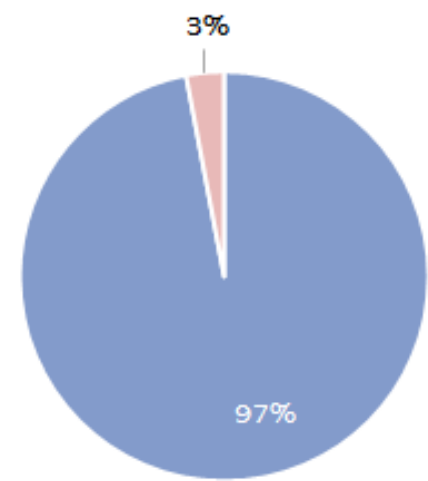
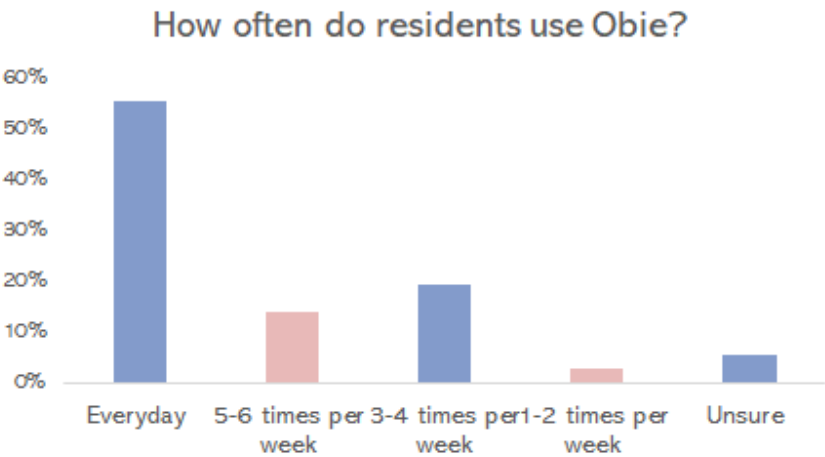


4. A TECH TRANSFORMATION: IMPACT ANALYSIS

Residents' movement was significantly improved according to 97% of respondents, only one reported that the level of physical activity remained the same.

The same percentage reported that Obie is easy to use, highlighting the importance of designing products for seniors instead of attempting to have them learn complex interfaces.

94% of respondents said the residents in their facilities use Obie at least 3-4 times per week. Over half (57%) of interviewed helpers say residents used the platform every single day.



■ Plan to continue utilizing Obie after pandemic

97% of respondents believe there is a role for senior tech after the pandemic and plan to continue utilizing Obie after COVID-19.

4. THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY - TESTIMONIALS

“Obie has helped increase resident's participation. I've seen a resident go from not wanting to do much throughout the day to love playing with Obie and never want to stop engaging with the device.”



“Obie has really increased the amount of socializing between residents. As a result of Obie, they are talking to each other more about their time spent playing with Obie.”

“As a result of Obie, our residents are visibly happier and we've also observed an increase in alertness.”

“Residents are sociable and excited about using the Obie. More positive attitude and increase in socialization noted.”

Unit managers, directors, activities specialists, and RNs in these senior homes and care centres made up the respondent group.

5 OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE



Identify the specific issues your facility is facing



Personalize tech for seniors



Focus on solutions with a lasting impact

Examining the data, it can be concluded that Obie for Seniors is an upstanding tool for use in homes where senior citizens have been struggling with the effects of this pandemic.

The loneliness, isolation, and depression that has been affecting the world over during quarantines and lockdowns are no different in nursing homes, where there are already many health issues for caregivers to deal with over and above the threat of COVID-19 and its ripple effects.

With information gathered from surveying approximately 24 homes, the gaming projector is shown to have had positive effects on communication, social skills, mental dexterity, and overall mental health in the vast majority of senior residents, with caregivers saying the technology made a difference with 94% of respondents seeing improvements in their residents of at least 4 on a 5-point scale when they began using Obie.

The recommendation is thus to identify the specific problems within the facility, cater the technology toward older adults, and to invest in solutions that have a lasting impact instead of an overnight solution that won't stick.