

Elder Care Disruptive Technology Involves More Than Just Apps

Sherwin Sheik Founder & CEO of CareLinx, an online nationwide marketplace that directly connects families with professional and affordable caregivers

As a former hedge fund analyst who spent years identifying promising investment opportunities, I don't understand what is deemed "news" by the tech media out here in Silicon Valley. On Wall Street, return on capital is viewed as a critical metric, but tech reporters are more impressed by the size of a capital raise, not what is actually done with the money or whether it will be used to develop a technology that will have a life changing impact. That's why we are in the midst of a venture capital lead technology bubble that likely is going to end badly for many venture investors.

In the elder care space, technology is playing a major role in helping keep America's aging population in their homes. But the advancements aren't coming from young Turks inventing apps to provide some clever on-demand services. Rather, the great strides are being made from more mature companies, often from ones you would least expect.

AT&T is one such company. The telecommunications company recently announced that it plans to partner with the Texas Medical Center in Houston and its network of hospitals and researchers to develop digital solutions for the healthcare industry. "We've been listening to the health care industry, many of whom are already customers, about the challenges they face today," Chris Penrose, Senior Vice President, Internet of Things, AT&T, [said in a news release](#). "We want to help create stronger connections between caregivers and patients."

Intel is another mature company on the cutting edge of elder care technology innovation. The company's [Care Innovations subsidiary](#) is a pioneer in collecting, aggregating, and analyzing data that connects payers, caregivers, and consumers to enable older Americans to live independently, wherever they call home.

Some elder care innovations are coming from companies focused entirely on the space, such as [GreatCall, a leading provider of active aging and independent living solutions](#). GreatCall is at the forefront of an emerging technology known as Ambient Assisted Living (AAL), which can aggregate data from connected home devices and sensors and integrate it with healthcare devices. The technology's great benefit is that it analyzes and detects an elder person's activity within the home, makes determinations of their physical, cognitive, or affective state and recognizes unusual behavior patterns.

(A more detailed and scientific explanation, from which I borrowed, can be found [here](#)).

AAL can be used to help families closely monitor a loved one's activities and help determine whether any cognitive declines are the result of normal aging or related to developing dementia. Given that the AARP estimates that half of Alzheimer's patients go undiagnosed, AAL can prove to be a major breakthrough in the early detection of dementia. The technology isn't as cool or easy to understand as most apps, but its successful development will dramatically improve healthcare for America's aging population and likely allow millions of people to remain safely in their homes.

What set legendary early stage investor Tom Perkins apart from most venture capitalists today was [his rigid adherence](#) to supporting only companies with products or applications that had the potential to be truly meaningful. Mature companies like AT&T, Intel, and others are increasingly usurping young upstarts and leading the way on the innovation front, particularly in the elder care space.

Given that the Silicon Valley press has not taken notice of this seismic shift, perhaps the tech media is ripe for some disruptive innovation.