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Component 2: Debate & Supporting Paper

MODULE: Living with Care: The Older Person

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Technology is integral to modern life, affecting communication, healthcare, entertainment and information access. It provides tools for social interaction, cognitive stimulation and emergency assistance, enhancing overall well-being and quality of life for older adults while offering support to care givers (Rinderud, 2021). Particularly for older adults, technology serves as a multifaceted ally, enriching their lives through enhanced social interactions, advanced healthcare solutions, tailored entertainment options, and seamless access to a wealth of information.

During the debate, my standpoint favoured the implementation of technology necessary for the elderly UK population and enhancing the quality of life for older individuals. Some of the arguments we used to back this statement were:

- Enhanced healthcare access, technology allows older adults to access medical services remotely, reducing the need for physical travel and provide timely healthcare support (Hart, Henwood and Wyatt, 2004).
- Medication management, medication reminder apps and smart dispensers help seniors manage their medication schedules, reducing the risk of emergencies (Stuck et al., 2017).
- Cognitive stimulation, examples of activities include, memory games, crossword puzzles and problem-solving games (Seniorsite, 2023).
- Social connectivity, technology can help by connecting people remotely and provide essential services online. Many organisations distributed tablets to older adults during COVID-19 (Age UK, 2022).

Reflecting on these arguments, it becomes evident that technology plays a pivotal role in enhancing the overall well-being of older adults. Remote healthcare access reduces the need for travel and ensures timely support. Medication reminder apps and smart dispensers help manage medications better, reducing emergencies. Technology also offers engaging activities for cognitive stimulation, like memory games and puzzles. Moreover, it plays a vital role in connecting older individuals socially, as seen with tablet distribution during the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, technology has a transformative and positive impact on healthcare, medication management, cognitive well-being, and social connectivity for older adults.

During the debate, the opposite group opposed the implementation of technology deemed necessary for the elderly UK population, arguing against its potential benefits for older individuals' quality of life. Some of the arguments they used during the debate were:

- Security and privacy issues, increased risk of fraud and cyber attacks due to lack of experience with safety on the internet (Blank and Lutz, 2016).
- Impact on physical and mental wellbeing, extended periods of time in front of the screen can result in poor posture and a rise in physical inactivity and visual fatigue (Caspi, Daniel & Kave, 2019).
- Social isolation, older adults still prefer keeping in touch in person and technology can increase depression (Freeman et al, 2021).

Reflecting on these concerns, it's essential to acknowledge the potential drawbacks of technology for older adults. Security and privacy issues loom large, with an increased risk of fraud and cyber attacks due to a lack of experience in navigating online safety. This raises concerns about the vulnerability of older individuals to digital threats. However, implementing comprehensive education programs on online safety could empower older individuals to navigate the digital landscape securely.

Statistics need to do

Support systems need to do

During the pandemic, older individuals faced increased vulnerability due to health risks, social isolation, and disruptions to traditional support systems. The use of technology became pivotal in addressing these challenges. Telehealth services ensured older adults could access medical consultations remotely, reducing exposure to the virus (Age UK, 2020). Technology facilitated virtual social interactions, combating the isolation imposed by lockdowns. Moreover, online delivery services and digital communication enabled the elderly to receive essential goods and stay connected with support networks. The pandemic emphasised the essential role of technology in enhancing the quality of life for older individuals by ensuring continued access to healthcare, reducing social isolation, and supporting their overall well-being (Age UK, 2020).

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