

Locating Technology for People Who are at Risk of Wandering:

Tips for Consumers

Who may use Locating Technology?

Locating Technology may be used in order to locate someone who wanders or runs away and is at risk as a result of this behaviour. People may have Alzheimer's disease, autism, developmental delay or other conditions that cause difficulty with problem solving. Locating Technology is not appropriate for everyone and is only one strategy that may help in coping with wandering behaviour.

Locating technology seems to fulfill two needs:

1. To locate a person who is lost
2. To provide increased independence to a person who wishes to go out alone but may become lost

What is Locating Technology?

Locating Technology is developing at a rapid pace. Generally the person who wanders wears a device such as wrist band or carries a device such as a cell phone. Varying degrees of support and features are available. Some devices rely on caregivers to find the wearer, while others use a monitoring service, such as a call centre, to locate the wearer. One technology relies on police services to find the wearer. The technology generally uses global positioning systems (GPS) or FM (radio). A number of features may be offered, for example: geofence (defined boundary that initiates an alert if crossed), panic buttons or two-way communication.

What should I think about when considering the use of Locating Technology?

Ethical issues:

- Locating technology is associated with tracking animals and criminals, which may lead to stigma.
- Locating technology may infringe on a person's right to privacy, dignity and freedom.
- Use of locating technology may broadcast to the general public that the person has a disability, which may lead to social isolation or vulnerability.
- Who will give consent for the person to use technology? There are currently no guidelines.
- Does anyone have the right to force someone to use locating technology?
- Will use of technology lead to decreased supervision or loss of human contact?
- Will use of the technology lead to confinement.

Human issues

- Person at risk (wearer)
 - Does the locating technology need to be attached or carried?
 - Can the person tolerate wearing a locating technology?
 - Does it matter what the locating technology looks like e.g. size, weight, aesthetics?
 - Would a "help/call" button be useful?
 - Does the wearer need to identify his/her own location?
 - Is there more than one wearer? How many?

- Caregiver(s)
 - Who needs to track/locate the person e.g. caregiver, agency, call centre, police?
 - Is 2-way communication needed with the person who wanders?
 - How easy is to maintain the locating technology e.g. charging, cleaning?
 - Does the locating technology require special skills/knowledge/training to use?
 - Does the caregiver need to have knowledge of the area? Is a map required?
 - Is the system flexible to changing needs e.g. going on vacation?

Technical Issues

- Does the locating technology need to be waterproof or water resistant?
- Where might the wearer need to be located?
 - in a building
 - in a forest
 - in/near water
 - inside/outside
 - outside immediate community
- How long does the battery need to last?
- Would geo-fencing be useful?
- Does the locating technology need other equipment e.g. computer, internet access, cell phone, charging bay?
- When is an alarm/alert required:
 - When the locating technology is removed?
 - When the wearer falls?
 - When the wearer is near/in water?
 - When the wearer is out of a specific range or off a pre-determined route?
 - When the wearer leaves a building?
 - When the wearer is near traffic?
- Where will the locating technology be used:
 - Facility e.g. long term care facility or school
 - Residence
 - Neighbourhood
 - Everywhere

N.B. Locating Technology is developing rapidly. This “Tip Sheet” is intended as a guide only and does not necessarily address all issues associated with choosing locating technology.

This “Tip List” was developed in October 2006 by members of:

The Locating Technology Project Team

School of Rehabilitation Medicine

Institute of Applied Health Sciences

Room 403

McMaster University

1400 Main Street West

Hamilton, ON, L8S 1C7

For more information contact Elizabeth Stegglés:

Tel: 905 525 9140 x21096 – Email: stegg@mcmaster.ca