

U. DIAZ, A. GARCÍA, E. URDANETA. *What elderly users do not want from technology: A qualitative approach*. *Gerontechnology* 2010;9(2):210; doi:10.4017/gt.2010.09.02.267.00 **Purpose** User-centred design allows the technical developers to know specific characteristics about the potential end users. In the specific case of elderly users, within the scope of EC funded VITAL¹ project, consideration of their needs in areas such as communication, family and social relationships, social support and leisure is a key point which may guide the development of technological applications. Hence, it is not only good to know what users want from technology, but also what they refuse as features of what may be perceived by them as an assault to their autonomy, independence or dignity, thus putting in risk the principles of European research Ethics² such as the principle of human dignity. **Method** Individual interviews and focus groups were conducted to assess elderly users' opinion about technology and specific different applications: (i) a videoconference service on the TV, (ii) a reminder application and tourist audio guide application on a mobile phone, and (iii) a personal newspaper on a PC. The intention was to improve their quality of life and social relationships within the scope of the VITAL Project. A total of 21 Spanish, elderly users, ranging from 60 to 77 years old (mean 66.57, sd 4.04) were recruited for the evaluation of different applications. Extracts of the answers given by them were analyzed and all the references to the devices' acceptability were qualitatively analyzed. **Results & Discussion** The analysis of users' feedback showed some key factors that should be taken into account, such as: (i) elderly users do not want a device to do a specific task (i.e. use an agenda or a reminder application) if it takes long to learn how to use it or if it requires a greater effort than continuing doing it as usual (i.e. traditional paper-and-pencil, writing down the appointments in a paper calendar), results that may agree with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)³; (ii) elderly users would like to have new applications integrated in those devices they already know and which they naturally use in their daily lives; in other words, they do not want to keep buying and spending money on additional technological devices, but to have new implementations adapted to devices they already know; and (iii) elderly users do not want devices that perform tasks that make them feel dependent upon technology (i.e. a reminder application that makes them rely on the device and stop using their memory abilities). Although these results are from a small sample of users of a particular project, it is likely that this feedback may be common to other similar projects, sites and cultures, and provides an attempt to set lessons learned about what-not-to-do when developing technological devices for elderly people.

References

1. VITAL; Vital Assistance for the Elderly Project; www.ist-vital.org; retrieved January 2010
2. <http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/index.cfm?fuseaction=public.topic&id=366&lang=1>; retrieved January 2010
3. Davis FD. *MIS Quarterly* 1989;13(3):319-339

Keywords: VITAL, acceptability, elderly, qualitative approach, ethics

Address: INGEMA, Spain; E: elena.urdaneta@ingema.es