

J.A. BROWN, T. DAVIS, J. SINGH, D. DUNN, B. DE SCHUTTER. *Is Wii for Me? Gerontechnology* 2012;11(2):399; doi:10.4017/gt.2012.11.02.381.00 **Purpose** A gradual demographic shift within the gaming market<sup>1,2</sup> has opened up a new perspective toward digital games as a tool for improved physical, cognitive, and emotional health, and socialization among the older adult population. Paradoxically, only a limited amount of research<sup>3-8</sup> identifies factors that influence digital game engagement among older adult gamers and non-gamers. The primary goal of this pilot study was to assess perceptions of digital games among older adult residents at an assisted living facility. **Method** This mixed methods study implemented a sequential exploratory design. Participants were residents of an assisted living facility and were self-identified as gamers (members of the facility's Nintendo Wii bowling league) or non-gamers (non-members of the league). All participants were provided with a self-administered 19-item questionnaire that was developed by the research team. This was used to measure self-perception of general health, viewpoints towards technology and digital games, and both non-digital and digital game preferences. Based on the results of these preliminary quantitative findings, an interview guide was constructed and administered for focus group purposes. Detailed notes were taken during the focus group sessions and were later reviewed for related themes. **Results & Discussion** A total of 24 participants (aged 66 and above) completed the questionnaire; 5 of whom identified themselves as members of the Wii bowling league (gamers). Unique insights were gained regarding perceived benefits and barriers from both the gamers and the non-gamers. For example, among the gamers, all but one responded as having average or better health status, and all reported having a positive emotional status after playing and regarded gameplay as a form of exercise and socialization. Also, most indicated that digital game engagement made them more comfortable with learning new modes of technology. The most cited barriers to gameplay among non-gamers include a lack of interest and limitations due to physical impairment, which resonates with findings by previous authors<sup>3,5,6</sup>. Participants of the gamer focus group discussion revealed overall agreement that gameplay provides social, physical, and emotional benefits that are unique to the context of digital game engagement. Those within the non-gamer focus group expressed interest in learning new modes of technology, but were apprehensive due to reasons related to fear of embarrassment. The study identified a preliminary set of design recommendations, as the focus groups indicated that the hardware could be better designed for the age-related needs of the participants. Additionally, participants provided suggestions for ways to appropriately introduce gaming technology to older adults.

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**Affiliation:** University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky, USA; E: julie.a.brown@uky.edu

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