T. MARQUINE RAYMUNDO, C. DA SILVA SANTANA. **Fear and the use of technological devices by older people.** *Gerontechnology 2014;13(2):260;* doi:10.4017/gt.2014.13.02.191.00 **Purpose** This study investigates the presence of fear related to the use of technology by a group of Brazilian elderly people. Studies suggest that older people may feel anxiety regarding the use of technology (computer anxiety), which is defined as emotional fear, apprehension and phobia felt by individuals related to interacting with computers or when thinking of working with a computer[1-3]. **Method** This is a transversal, qualitative–quantitative and analytical study. The sample of participants was already defined. Data was collected at public and private locations in the city of Olimpia, in the state of Sao Paulo (i.e. a community center for the elderly and a club for elderly practicing sports) and in Ribeirao Preto City, Sao Paulo, where data collection was performed at the Digital Inclusion Project for Elderly (PIDI). Subjects were recruited by the researcher, through visits to the places mentioned above and by formal invitation to individuals to participate in the study. The data collection was done using a socioeconomic questionnaire, the scale of acceptance of technologies and a questionnaire about the factors that affect the use of electronic devices. The last two questionnaires had questions relating to the fear of using technology. At the PIDI, subjects were interviewed at the beginning of the course, so that there was no influence from the contact with the technologies and lessons on the feelings of fear on the participants. Descriptive statistics were used as the method of data analysis. **Results & Discussion** The study included 100 older people aged between the ages of 60 and 86 years with a mean age of 69.38 years. Of the participants, 78% were female, 44% married, 59% had completed high school, and 86% were not economically active (retired or housewives). Of the elderly respondents, 24% reported being afraid to use new technological devices and 43.4% reported fear related to damaging the devices. The elderly responded that they feel afraid when using the internet; they fear viruses, social networks and spoiling or breaking the device. They are also afraid of ATMs, computers, new things, making mistakes and the consequences of these mistakes, such as deleting other people's documents on the computer, not being able to learn how to use a computer and being unable to use the device. They reported being afraid because of previous bad experiences with technology. The subjects stated that the complexity of the devices makes them difficult to use. The many features available on devices mean that people cannot understand the precise operation of the device. Also, the cost of maintaining the electronics eventually leaves them afraid that something will happen to the device. Older people who reported feeling apprehensive about damaging the device reported that they use excessive care when using the device. They think the devices should be simpler and also reported feeling apprehension about causing damage and not being able to get anyone to help fix any errors. Despite these difficulties, the elderly reported that they could overcome their fears after attending courses related to the inclusion of the elderly in the world; they are curious about technological advances. The results indicated that the considerable advancements in technology bring benefits, whether these advancements are inherent to the devices or to the individuals concerned, regardless of the barriers faced. Some of the barriers reported in the responses of the subjects included design, multiple functions, lack of security, and cognitive deficits. From the older people's responses, it is possible to note that fear has a significant influence on the attitudes of elderly people in relation to technological devices that can result in a lack of use or in a search for solutions to mitigate their fears and difficulties, such as seeking digital inclusion programs. Therefore, more research on variables such as the fear that may influence the use of new technology is needed, and strategies should be created to allow the elderly to better handle the obstacles that prevent the use of these devices.

References

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