

## *A digital inclusion project for older people*

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**Purpose** Digital inclusion programs for seniors help older people use information and communication technologies (ICTs). Their development is essential to ensure the autonomy and empowerment of individuals in making lifelong use of ICT resources<sup>1</sup>. Such programs should take into account various factors related to aging: sensory, cognitive, cultural, etc.. Suitable teaching materials and effectively planned environments are essential for ideal learning. This includes factors as furniture design, room lighting, font sizes and style, and conceptual groupings<sup>2</sup>. The Digital Inclusion Itinerant Project for older people (PIDI-I) emerged out of the experiences of a group of researchers from the Medical School of Ribeirao Preto, University of Sao Paulo. They developed a digital inclusion project for seniors, involving about 400 elderly people. PIDI-I aims to reach communities and/or groups formed by seniors, seeking to assist them in their specific difficulties related to the use of electronic equipment in daily life, such as computers, the Internet, cell phones, remote controls, digital cameras and other devices. We describe the first experience of PIDI-I among two groups of older people interested in solving difficulties related to their use of new technologies. **Method** 55+ Years old participants originated from the Circle Workers and Daily Center for older people in the City of Ribeirao Preto, Sao Paulo State, Brazil, during November and December of 2013. This included 30 seniors (15 from each center) of both genders (predominantly female), of different levels of education (including illiterate people). The working team consisted of students from the Occupational Therapy and Biomedical Informatics programs at Ribeirão Preto School of Medicine, University of Sao Paulo. After contact was established between the PIDI-I and the groups' coordinators, the PIDI-I team accessed those communities amenable to the visit and met to develop the activities. It depended on the number of students per class, how many devices they have difficulty using, and the type of difficulties. The first step was identifying which equipment the participants had an interest in learning to use. In the first meeting, practical classes on the use of cell phones were developed and, in the second, other devices such as digital and analog cameras, microwave ovens, digital picture frames, bread-makers, and digital blood pressure and blood glucose monitors were covered. **Results & Discussion** The main difficulties reported by the participants relating to the use of cell phones pertained to adding contacts and sending and reading messages. Participants claimed that they only used simpler functions, such as making and receiving calls. Regarding other devices, such as digital cameras, the chief difficulties involved using the filming and photo-viewing functions. Other difficulties included transferring information from a memory stick from/to digital picture frames, finding functions and applications in the tablets. In addition to individual and small group instruction, flyers printed with enlarged letters and colors to facilitate easy reading provided participants with a step by step tutorial. Participants gave the project a positive evaluation, and noted the opportunity for cross-generational knowledge exchange, free enrollment, and lack of travel requirements as especially positive aspects. The elderly stressed the importance of individualized attention of the monitors, and their difficulty in obtaining equivalent information from salespeople and family members. The seniors emphasized that the learning gained through their participation helped provide them with independence and autonomy in their daily activities, and suggesting that full use of these devices is only possible with the help of this type of initiative. We note that projects like these are relevant to Brazilian elderly people, because of the increasing amount of digital equipment integrated into everyday life in Brazil. To summarize: PIDI-I supported older people to use new technologies, increased their independence, and reduced digital exclusion.

### **References:**

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