

PAPER

Technology for Health

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Purpose Three out of five persons with dementia wander¹. Caregivers' experiences of a missing loved one can be devastating². Most US states fund Silver Alert programs that broadcast information about vulnerable older adults who wander and get lost. While the literature supports community engagement in the search and rescue of lost older adults, publically-funded silver alert programs are associated with jurisdictional issues and alert fatigue³. To reduce these limitations, a software platform, Community-ASAP (Figure 1), was developed to trigger alerts of missing older adults to community volunteers that are within specified geographic area(s).

Method We conducted a usability study on the Alpha version of Community-ASAP within greater Calgary, Canada. Ten participants were recruited from partner sites (Carya, Calgary Police Service, City of Calgary, and the Alzheimer Society of Calgary) and were assigned to the following roles: missing person with dementia, caregiver to the missing person, police officer, and community volunteers. To evaluate the usability of the Community-ASAP system, the volunteer missing person was placed into four different locations: an urban park, shopping mall, residential neighbourhood, and in a vehicle 25km outside of Calgary. The caregiver initiated a missing person report and volunteers received and responded to alerts. Total time to initiate the alert, and to locate missing persons were recorded for each location. Researchers observed caregiver and the community volunteer's interactions with and their response to the system. Immediately following each scenario, individual interviews were conducted with all volunteers on their experiences using Community-ASAP. A focus group with all participants one week later provided additional data on the ease of use of the system, to inform development of the Beta version.

Results & Discussion It was feasible to operate the Community-ASAP system for all four scenarios. Individual interviews and focus group discussions revealed that the system allowed community volunteers to participate in a search. The police were able to engage volunteers beyond just notifying the public, thereby saving time and resources when locating a missing vulnerable adult with dementia. Suggestions for future Beta testing include features to make the interface more user friendly and determining the lead time before the police is able to release an alert to community volunteers. Evaluation and implementation of a Beta version of C-ASAP with actual persons who have dementia will expand to jurisdictions in Ontario and British Columbia.

References

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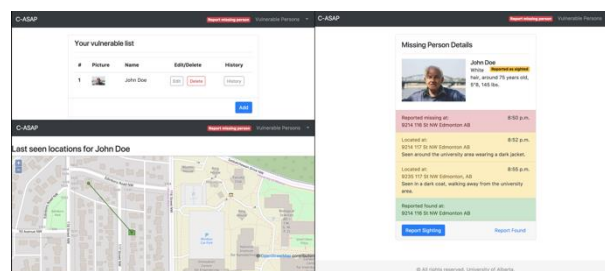


Figure 1. Interface of the C-ASAP system