8.   The Dawn of Gerotechnology. Summer 2000. A Pamphlet of the Alliance for Aging Research founded in 1986; www.agingresearch.org/brochures/gerotech/gerotech.html (Accessed October 9, 2003)

9.   Holt BJ. Gerotechnology: Providing Service Access to the Elderly. Proceedings INET'98; Reston: ISOC; 1998; www.isoc.org/inet98/proceedings/8a/8a_1.htm (Accessed October 9, 2003)

10.   www.gerotechnology.org/ (Accessed October 9, 2003)

11.   www.gerontotechnology.de and www.gerontechnology.de (Accessed October 9, 2003)

12.   GGT, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Gerontotechnik mbH, Iserlohn, Germany; www.gerontotechnik.de and www.gerontotechnology.de (Accessed March 15, 2004)

Johanna E.M.H. van Bronswijk PhD
EurProBiol
Technische Universiteit Eindhoven,
Netherlands
e-mail: j.e.m.h.v.Bronswijk@tue.nl

GeroTech as a Corporation (Reply)

I am the owner of GeroTech as well as the author of your number 9 reference above. When I gave the speech in 1998, I made up the word *gero*technology. I was unaware of others having created it also. I thought gero*n*technology was more difficult to pronounce and there was the problem of the extra letter. So when I founded my company in the same year, I named it GeroTech. GeroTech became a registered trademark[1]; not *gero*technology. I saw the reference at the website about the *gero*technology that deals with regenerative medicine, obviously GeroTech does not do that. We only focus on the use of technology by older adults and modifying technology so that normal aging changes do not make its use difficult.

Reference

1.   www.gerotech.com (Accessed March 17, 2004)

Barbara J. Holt, PhD
GeroTech Corporation
e-mail: bholt@gerotech.com

Coining new words: Old (Greek) wine in new bottles? (Reply)

Given that none of the three competing terms appear in the Oxford English Dictionary[1] (OED), probably the English language's authoritative source, we might want to start by looking at the root of the term in a word that does appear in that source: 'gerontology'. Its root is given in the OED as:

f. Gr. γεροντ-, γερ∞υ old man + -O + -LOGY

Thus the Greek root seems to be old man, γεροντ, (geront / geron) with the 'o' and 'logy' as suffixes.

However, a look at another term, 'gerocomy' shows that the 'gero' component derives from the Greek root for old, γηρο, γερο, so we probably need to consider 'gero' as the primary root, and not tie the term to old males, despite the fact that one of the most famous longitudinal studies in gerontology/ geriatrics began with only the male half of the species as participants (the Baltimore Longitudinal Study on Aging). The National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the USA mandated the inclusion of women and minorities (and now children) in human research that they fund so perhaps this problem is behind us. This selective attention to males is still a problem in animal research studies, as one of my neuroscience colleagues often points out.

A look in the OED for the word 'geron' yields this string as an alternate spelling for 'gyron', a triangular piece. This somehow seems fitting in deciding among these three spellings, but offers us little guidance.

So, whether to push for gerotechnology, gerontechnology, or gerontotechnology becomes a matter of taste. Gerontotechnology seems to defy parsimony with all the extra letters. Gerotechnology runs the risk of modifying the term technology to make it 'old technology' somewhat of a paradoxical result for the modified term, given the unavoidable association of the term technology with the meaning 'new'. Gerontechnology runs the risk of tying technology to males, somewhat true in research findings, where men are more likely to seek out and use technology, but not desirable given that the older population is primarily female. Perhaps 'geronttechnology' would be the more accurate term for this sense.

In the end, it may come down to a factor that is central to technology. In technology, as some have commented in the sub-field of software development, it is more important to be first than to be best. It is also important to be 'backward-compatible'. Given that the journal <u>Gerontechnology</u> is the first of its kind using 'gero' and 'technology' in its spelling, and that the first use of a term with these roots appears to lie with its Dutch originators in the inaugural conference on this topic, perhaps we can all be content with that spelling.

Reference
1. http://dictionary.oed.com/ (Accessed March 15, 2004)

Neil Charness PhD
Psychology Department and Pepper Institute on Aging and Public Policy,
Florida State University, USA
e-mail: <u>charness@psy.fsu.edu</u>

A plea for gerontechnology (Reply)

Of all the terms that were coined or invented to describe the domain of scientific and technological developments for the benefit of aging and older people it was gerontechnology that saw the light first in 1989[1] as proposed by Graafmans and Brouwers. But, being the oldest term in use in itself is not a strong argument to promote gerontechnology as the best and only one.

When creating the domain of activities and building up a network of scientists and professionals to further elaborate this field it became clear that an interdisciplinary collaboration between gerontology and technology was a conditio sine qua non for progress in the future. Of course other disciplines had to be taken on board as well to create truly interdisciplinary and comprehensive teams for the work at hand. It was therefore that gerontechnology was chosen.

The term gerontotechnology as a grammatical or linguistic more correct one was also considered but so difficult to pronounce in for example English, German or French that it was not opted for. The activities under this heading are also only a subset of the bigger domain.

Furthermore, it was discussed whether any term ending with –technique or -tech would be an option, but these terms would only cover technical products and services for the target group and exclude scientific research.

It is interesting to compare all the terms and then make an analysis what type of activities are really carried out by the groups or associations that use these terms. This has been done quite well by Van Bronswijk in the correspondence submitted to this issue of Gerontechnology