

# Governance, Social Policy and Communication

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## **Designing digital health tools to support aging in place: Strategies to minimize perils and maximize promise** C. Nebeker. *Gerontechnology* 25(s)

**Purpose** Digital and AI-enabled tools designed to support aging in place hold substantial potential to enhance autonomy, safety, social connectedness, and health self-management for older adults. Realizing this promise requires alignment of innovation with the values, capacities, and expectations of our aging population. This presentation synthesizes findings from several empirical studies our team has conducted to evaluate mobile and connected health technologies, including the readability and transparency of informed consent and privacy communications and ethical frameworks guiding AI-enabled digital health research. **Method** Analyses indicate significant variability in readability and transparency of privacy policies and data-handling disclosures, with limited clarity regarding data collection, sharing, and retention practices [1–3]. Older adults express enthusiasm for technologies that enhance independence and well-being, but also report barriers related to usability, privacy concerns, and trust in how personal data are managed [4,5]. Tools often emphasize ease of learning but may overlook error recovery, skill retention, and sustained engagement [5]. Ethical frameworks emphasize embedding accessibility, informed consent, responsible data stewardship, and balanced risk–benefit considerations throughout the technology lifecycle [6,7]. **Results and Discussion** Three priorities emerge for strengthening responsible digital health innovation for older adults: (1) engaging older adults as co-design partners to ensure relevance and usability; (2) applying aging-specific usability evaluation methods to promote safety and long-term adoption; and (3) implementing transparent, comprehensible privacy and data-management practices to build and maintain trust. Together, these strategies support development of ethical, inclusive, and sustainable digital health tools that empower older adults to thrive while aging in place.

### **References**

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