Welcome to ISG08: Smart technology for active longevity

One major aspect of today's society is the significant increase in longevity and the progressive ageing of the population in many countries. In Europe, by 2025, the 60+ population will have increased by 66%, and will constitute about 30% of the population. There will be a particular increase in the 75+ and 85+, amounting to around 15% and 2.5%, respectively, of the total. In the latter groups, there will be about twice as many women as men. The situation will be similar in the America's, Asia, and Australia. Although Africa will have a different demography, ageing persons will also face a new situation.

At the same time, the demand for self-sufficiency is increasing among senior citizens. They generally choose to continue living in their own homes or in any case want to have a maximum degree of independence. As a result, there will be an increase in the demands as to health, living arrangement, communication, mobility, ergonomics, productivity, use of free time, social and cultural involvement, personal and professional care and attention, to which the social and territorial infrastructures will have to adjust. This is true both for their third phase of life in which they basically live an independent life and for their fourth phase of life in which frailty makes them dependent on informal and formal care.

In comes technology as a major source of radical change in society at large. Technology can provide important solutions to the above issues and many professional groups are now working in this direction. In particular Gerontechnology - term born in Europe just prior to the 1990's as a composite of two words: 'gerontology', the scientific study of aging, and 'technology' - is concerned with the biological, psychological, social, and medical aspects of ageing, exploiting the potentials offered by the progress of technology. Also, gerontechnology works to diminish unwanted side-effects of new technology, such as unclear, unwanted, or over-extensive functionality, and difficult user interfaces. Such unwanted effects threaten ageing persons to alienate from their own society as many of them can testify.

The 6th Conference of the International Society for Gerontechnology - ISG08 - will be gathering gerontechnology specialists from around the world in Italy in 2008. The conference is staged about once every three years, and it is now back in Europe after nine years. ISG08 will be a forum where all people involved in activities on gerontechnology (robotics researchers, architects, biomedical engineers, neuroscientists, biologists, designers, experts in political science and economics, business people, and professionals from many other disciplines) will meet and interact, present new results, and discuss future lines of research and development. Over 200 professionals of some 20 countries will make out content and discussions during June 4-6, 2008. The conference will be preceded by a 2-day master class for PhD students.

Preface

The conference theme: SMART TECHNOLOGY FOR ACTIVE LONGEVITY reflects the ever increasing role of automatic and adaptive functions in technical commodities and environments of the society in which ageing persons will be embedded.

This time, the conference will be hosted in Pisa placed in Tuscany, an Italian region sensitive to issues related to increasing aging of population. Tuscany is a very attractive region for many European senior citizens to retire, due to a unique mix of cultural heritage and quality of life with an extraordinary wealth of artistic and cultural heritage, deep attention to preserving the environment and social relations, excellent climate, good food and a relaxed, friendly atmosphere.

We will see each other in Pisa, working to make ISG08 a successful event!

Herman Bouma, Honorary General Chair
Paolo Dario, General Chair

Silvestro Micera, Program Chair for Europe & Africa
James L. Fozard, Program Chair for the Americas
Ken Sagawa, Program Chair for Asia & Australia