

Book review

BECHOR ZVI AMINOFF 2007. MEASUREMENT OF SUFFERING IN END-STAGE ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE. TEL AVIV: DYONON; ISBN 965-7077-37-0; US\$ 39.00

The book 'Measurement of suffering in end-stage Alzheimer's disease' deals, as the title states, primarily with aspects of suffering with dementia in the older population. Suffering in this group of people does also have a link to technology, since some technology may contribute to suffering, such as feeding tubes, or relief suffering, for instance, special anti-decubitus mattresses.

The book is an overview of extensive research carried out by Dr Aminoff and his colleagues, which has been presented at many (inter)national conferences and published in a number of renowned journals.

Aminoff explains why he started his investigation of suffering in end-stage dementia, instead of quality of life, satisfaction or well-being, by stating that due to the health status of older people with end-stage dementia and their inability to communicate, other concepts than suffering are not appropriate. What can be seen, felt, pursued, and therefore treated and possibly prevented is the level of suffering. Aminoff introduces the Entropy Theory of Human Suffering. In his view, the ageing process presents an increasing level of entropy, a process of the loss of reserves of the system until survival is no longer possible, and the human being passes away.

In order to examine suffering, Aminoff developed and validated an objective tool, called Mini Suffering State Examination scale or MSSE, which reaches from 0 to 10, and covers 10 items. MSSE should not be mistaken for MMSE, the well-known Mini Mental State Examination. Suffering exists in various degrees and levels of suffering can be high (7-10), intermediate (4-6) or low (0-4). Items on the MSSE scale are: (i) not calm, (ii) screams, (iii) pain, (iv) decubitus ulcers, (v) malnutrition, (vi) eating disorders, (vii) invasive actions, (viii) unstable medical conditions, (ix) suffering according to medical opinion, and (x) suffering according to family opinion. Part 1 of the book addresses these 10 items in great detail, and empirically shows how they relate to suffering, and how they relate to 6-month survival rates of patient populations in geriatric wards. Many items turn out to be predictors of imminent or quick passing away. In general, it turns out that the higher a person's MSSE score, the sooner this person tends to die.

Another interesting feature of the book is the analysis why older people with end-stage dementia suffer, and how medical and nursing staff treat these sufferers. Many, according to the book, are not familiar with how to reduce suffering, partly because it is not a regular part of curricula and is not sufficiently covered by medical literature. A remarkable phenomenon, often unknown to people outside of the care environment, is the refusal phenomenon, which may be mistaken for burn out. Some staff may reject important challenges to provide appropriate care, deny existence of the patient's personality and rights, and may not invest sufficient time for treatment. The book also mentions hospices for end-stage dementia patients with a high MSSE score as a way to reduce suffering, and to allow people to pass away in a dignified way. An eye-opener was to learn that extra treatment, often asked for by relatives not wanting to lose their loved one, can even contribute to extra suffering. Aminoff calls this the overprotection phenomenon.

The book has certain remarkable features, of which Part 2, a booklet of posters, in which the author explains his research chronologically and step-by-step, is the most prominent. The author takes the reader by the hand, and even though medical jargon is used in great quantities, constant repetition of information makes it interesting for non-medical specialists and family members of people with dementia. This is reinforced by the running head on the cover, saying 'for you and your physician'. The book, which has been written by an author from the Holy Land, is indeed punctuated with quotes from and references to the Torah and the Bible to reinforce statements made.

The book is further characterized by many pages with large quotes that sum up the essence of previous pieces of text, and many figures and tables to elaborate and illustrate the work. At the same time, readability could, in my view, be improved by omitting or summarizing large sections of Part 2 and integrating them into Part 1, also to reduce the number of repetitions in the abstracts making up Part 2. It was good to learn that the MSSE scale, which was developed in Israel and translated into English, has also been translated in Dutch for use in nursing homes, since the Netherlands is a country known for its large amount of care facilities for people with dementia.

The best quote that should appeal to all interested in the subject appears on page 126:

"Where should death occur? I would prefer to die in my own bed, in my own home. How would I like to die? With a low MSSE score!"
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PROF. EMERITA GLORIA GUTMAN PHD, NEW CONFERENCE SECRETARY AND ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Dr Gutman developed and directed both the Simon Fraser University Gerontology Research Centre and the Gerontology Department (formerly called the Gerontology Program) from 1982 to 2005. Currently, she is Professor emerita in the Gerontology Department, a Research Associate in the Gerontology Research Centre and a co-leader of the B.C. Network for Aging Research. She is widely known in the field of gerontology as an educator, researcher, and consultant. She is the author/editor of twenty books, over one hundred and eighty scholarly articles, reports, and chapters, as well as over two hundred and sixty conference papers. In 2007, she was awarded the Order of British Columbia in recognition of her pioneering work in the field of Gerontology. She has been a consultant to the Ministry of Lands, Parks and Housing in B.C., the Continuing Care Division of the B.C. Ministry of Health and to Health Canada. She has served on a number of federal-provincial task forces, including one that established guidelines for comprehensive services for the psychiatrically impaired elderly, and one which developed design guidelines for housing and care facilities for the elderly. Dr Gutman's research interests are wide-ranging; including seniors' housing, long term care, health promotion, dementia care, environmental design and seniors and emergency preparedness. She is currently conducting a series of studies in Canada and the United States as well as in the Dr Tong Louie Living Laboratory designed to make acute care hospitals more elder-friendly. Dr Gutman has been very active in scholarly and community organizations. She was the Founding President of the Gerontology Association of British Columbia, served two terms as President of the Canadian Association on Gerontology (1987-1991), and was President of the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics, from 2001 to 2005. She



is a Fellow of the Gerontological Society of America, a Director of the International Institute of Ageing - United Nations, Malta and a member of the World Health Organization's Expert Advisory Panel on Ageing and Health. Previously she served on the National Statistics Council which advises the chief Statistician of Canada, the Advisory Committee for the L' Chaim Adult Day Care Centre, the Board of Directors of the Louis Briar Home and Hospital for the Aged, the Vancouver-Richmond Health Board's Research and Evaluation Advisory Committee, and from 1994 to 1996 was Chair of the Board of Directors of the B.C. Institute Against Family Violence. Of relevance to her role with ISG2010, she chaired the organizing committee for the very successful 17th World Congress of the International Association of Gerontology which drew a record attendance of 4,068 from 75 countries.

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PROF. GER J. MAAS MSc, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Ger Maas earned his engineers and MSc degree in Civil Engineering in 1977 at Delft University of Technology. Subsequently he was employed by Strukton Group NV as head of the R&D department. In 1991 he obtained a full-time chair 'Construction Technology and Management' at Eindhoven University of Technology. Here he established the University Center for Building (UCB), which is devoted to knowledge exchange and valorization with industry. Since 1999 he serves as Director Strategy of Royal BAM Group NV, one of the major construction companies in Europe, but continues at the university with a part-time chair. Prof. Maas is active in the Economic Institute of the Netherlands Building Industry and the International Association for Automation and Robotics in Construction. In addition he is president of the European Network of Construction Companies for Research and Development. His research interests may be summarized as construction governance, building for the actual needs of the highest numbers of users of the built environment, including the rising number of older workers and citizens.

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PROF. RONIE NAVON PhD PENG, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Professor Navon has over eight years of industrial experience. He spent one year as a Visiting Professor at North Carolina State University (USA), and another at Concordia University (Canada). Since 1990 he has been with the Technion's Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering – the Construction Engineering and Management Program. Professor Navon has received awards from the American Society of Civil Engineers, the Haifa Municipality, and the International Association for Automation and Robotics in Construction. Professor Navon is a member of the editorial boards of Construction Management and Economics, Automation in Construction, Journal of Civil Engineering and Management, Construction Annual Review, Journal of Construction, and the Journal of Terramechanics. Professor Navon is a member of the Israel Society of Civil Engineers (ISCE) and the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE). In addition he is chairman of the Advisory Committee to the Government Registrar of General Contractors, and president of the International Association of Automation and Robotics in Construction (IAARC). Professor Navon is the author (or co-author) of over 130 publications, including research reports, papers in conferences, refereed journals and textbooks.

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ANNEKE VAN DER PLAATS MD PhD, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Dr Anneke (J.J.) van der Plaats specialized in geriatric medicine and is active as practitioner, has been director of a nursery home, and functions as researcher, advisor and trainer. In 1983 she was the first in the Netherlands to start a day-care facility for older adults. This initiative was embraced by the Ministry of Health and day-care centers are currently part of standard care. Together with neuropsychologist Ad Nouws (Tilburg University, the Netherlands), she initiated, designed and developed memory training. In 1994 she successfully defended her PhD thesis, 'Geriatricie, een spel van evenwicht'



[Geriatrics, a balancing game], in which she presented a concept for describing aging and chronic disease in a way to better underpin geriatric care. Afterwards, dr Van der Plaats combined her knowledge and experience with brain research results obtained by prof. dr A.R. Cools (Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands). This resulted in the development of a 4-level brain activity scheme that aptly describes the results of damage and aging of the brain, and serves as a basis for designing environments for the aging or damaged brain in its enormous variability among older adults. Although officially retired, dr van der Plaats is a member of Breincollectief (www.breinctief.nl) that designs environments for persons with dementia.

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DRAFT MINUTES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR GERONTECHNOLOGY

Venue: June 4, 2008, 1st floor of the Palazzo dei Congressi, Pisa, Italy

1. Welcome

The president of the ISG opened the assembly at 17:45H, and welcomed the 34 members present in the General Assembly

2. Draft minutes of the General Assembly of May 27, 2005 in Nagoya, Japan

The draft minutes of the General Assembly of May 27, 2005 were published in Gerontechnology 2005;4(1):56-57. The general assembly approved the minutes.

3. Announcements

The president announced that the next conference will be in Vancouver, organized by Andrew Sixsmith. Presentation of the draft content of the next conference is presented as item 9 in the minutes.

The president informed of renewed ISG websites, which have better functionality and hits by Google Scholar. Francesco Franchimon presented the pages for the assembly on the internet. Further information of the issue is available in Gerontechnology 2008;7(2):255.

4. ISG Proceedings May 2005-May 2008

- Final report on ISG05: the Nagoya Conference

Shigekazu Ishihara presented the final report on ISG05, the Nagoya Conference, on behalf of Prof. Nagamachi accompanied by Professor Yamaba. Impressions from the Nagoya conference are published in Gerontechnology 2005;4(1):55.

- Report on ISG08: the Pisa Conference

Vice president Paolo Dario presented a draft report of ISG08, the Pisa conference. So far, there have been 210 registered members, and 215 papers received. Thus the budget looks good with sponsors and attendants. Papers were also of good quality.

- Report of the president

The president presented the report, which was also published in the journal *Gerontechnology* 2008;7(2):256. The main items in the report were the journal, the financial situation of the society, master classes, and regional chapters. The president noted that members and libraries have been extended, but still there is a problem with financing. There are 2 regional chapters, Taiwan is in preparation.

- Report of the secretary-general

Hannele Hyppönen and Jeroen Knies presented the report of the secretary-general on behalf of Jan Ekberg, who has fallen ill and has retired from most of his working activities. Hannele mediated Jan's good wishes for the society and the conference. Jeroen Knies presented the statistics of the membership. New student members have been achieved since Nagoya, also some new full members. In addition we acquired some associate members. Since Nagoya, 20 new libraries joined. Those, who have not paid memberships fees, have been removed from the list.

- Report of the editor of the journal

Annelies van Bronswijk presented highlights of the report presented in *Gerontechnology* 2008;7(2):258. There have been improvements with the new website. Acceptance of indexing databases has been another improvement, which can attract additional interest.

5. Financial matters

Francesco Franchimon presented the financial report on behalf of Wiet Koren

- The report of the treasurer 2005, 2006, 2007.

- Reports of the auditors 2005, 2006, 2007.

The general assembly accepts the report of the treasurer and he was acquitted.

The question of the future of *Gerontechnology* journal is closely related to the financial matters. The paper version of the journal is expensive, and an option was presented by the president of converting the journal to an eJournal. The general assembly left the decision to the new board.

6. Papers for discussion and approval

Changing the conference time table from triennial to biannual: The suggestion is present-

ed in *Gerontechnology* 2008;7(2):256. The general assembly approves this suggestion.

Updates for the articles of association are presented in *Gerontechnology* 2008;7(2):261-264. There were no amendment suggestions, and the general assembly accepted the updated articles.

The suggested updates for the bylaws of the society are presented in *Gerontechnology* 2008;7(2):265-268. The updated bylaws were accepted by the general assembly.

7. Reports by the regional chapters

Kazuo Yamaba reported of the Japan chapter membership and activities.

Helianthe S.M. Kort reported of the Netherlands / Flanders chapter. Annual meetings have been scheduled. The first meeting in May 2008 was attended by 20 persons.

A France chapter is still under consideration. Taiwan has no formal chapter yet.

8. Elections, appointments and dismissals

8.1 The Board

The following members of the existing board were re-elected to the ISG board:

Giuseppe Anerdi 2nd term

Herman Bouma 3rd term

Dario Bracco 2nd term

Paolo Dario 2nd term

Francesco Franchimon 2nd term

Ramon Gutmann 2nd term

Mitsuo Nagamachi 3rd term

Kazuo Yamaba 3rd term

Hans-Werner Wahl 2nd term

Of the existing board, following persons were not standing for re-election:

Neil Charness (has served 3 terms),

Jan Ekberg, not available, Hannele Hyppönen from STAKES was elected to replace him

Wiet (L.G.H.) Koren, not available, Francesco Franchimon was elected to replace him

The following people were elected as new board members:

Presidents of regional chapters: Helianthe S.M. Kort (NL), Hiroyuki Umemuro (Japan)

Jeanne Tyrrell (France)

P. Sadasivan Nair (Botswana)

Amy Johal and Andrew Sixsmith (Canada)

Elizabeth Karol (Australia)

Sarah Czaja (successor of Neil Charness) if she approves

Jeroen Knies (associate-secretary)

Alain Franco (France), who took over the presidency of Herman Bouma at the meeting of the new board

Patricia Wright (UK)

The general assembly approved the new board members

8.2 Council

The council is to be elected from among the board members. These include the President, the Secretary-General, the Treasurer, The Vice-President of the Pisa Conference, the Vice President as organizers of the next conference, the Associate-Secretary for the next conference

8.3 Editors of the Journal

There have been some mutations between May 2005-2008.

The mutations were approved by the general assembly

9. Proposal next conference May 2010: Vancouver,

Andrew Sixsmith was represented by Gilles Virone in Pisa. A video conference connection was established to Vancouver to speak with Andrew Sixsmith. The president thanked Prof Sixsmith, and asked him to introduce the next conference. A PowerPoint presentation about the themes and issues was presented by the representative, Gilles Virone.

10. Conference 2012

Both Nankai Technical University (Taiwan) and Eindhoven University of Technology (the Netherlands) are ready to organize the conference after Vancouver in 2012, but a choice has yet to be made.

11. Any other business

There were no additional issues

12. Next meeting

The next general assembly will be in Vancouver in 2010.

13. Closing

The president closes the meeting at 18:58H

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General Secretary of the ISG

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MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT

After the Pisa conference some mutations took place in the offices held. Secretary General Hannele Hyppönen resigned and was replaced by another board member, Jeroen Knies. Also in the organizational team of the next conference (Vancouver 2010) a mutation appeared. Here the secretary of the Conference: Amy Johal resigned, and Gloria Gutman took her place. However, Amy will remain associated with conference organization. Gloria is the past President of the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics. She is very well known in the Gerontology's planet and she successfully organized the World Congress of Gerontology in Vancouver, 2001. And last but not least, our treasurer, Francesco Franchimon, found an

assistant-treasurer, Michiel Brink, to support him. Many thanks to Hannele, and welcome to the new officers!

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ISG2010 - 7TH WORLD GERONTECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE

Date: Thursday 27 May to Sunday 30 May 2010.

Venue: Marriott Pinnacle Hotel, Vancouver, Canada

Organizer (ISG Vice-president): Andrew Sixsmith PhD

Conference Secretary: Gloria Gutman PhD

Conference theme: Technologies for Health, Quality-of-Life and Ageing-in-Place

Introduction. The 2010 ISG conference brings together two crucial themes within gerontechnology. Firstly, most of the older people, given the right help and support, would prefer to continue living in their familiar homes and neighbourhoods for as long as possible. The use of technology, ranging from simple assistive devices to complex information and communication systems, has considerable potential for enhancing the lives of many older people and helping them to age-in-place. Secondly, much of the research and development within the field of ageing and technology has focused on issues of safety and security. While these remain important, equal consideration needs to be given to how technology can positively enhance the everyday lives of older people by supporting independent living, social participation and improving health and well-being. These considerations need to be contextualized within the realities of global population ageing. The impact of ageing baby-boomers will present enormous challenges to health and economic institutions in coming decades. It is a reality that demands creative responses and the opportunities afforded by new technology are an important part of this response.

Aim. The aim of the conference will be to bring together researchers from around the world, who are working in the area of gerontechnology, to present the results of their research and assess the implications for the development of practical solutions to the needs of older people, family carers and care professionals. In particular, the aim is to explore how technology can:

- (i) Enhance quality of life and well-being;
- (ii) Preserve autonomy and feelings of security; and

(iii) Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of health services.

A key concern is to move away from technology-push and problem-focused approaches to researching technology and ageing to an approach that is driven by gerontological theories and concepts. However, research and development in this area has to deal with a number of challenges: What are the important directions for research and development? How can we ensure that older people benefit from these technologies? How can we ensure that some people are not excluded from accessing these technologies? What are the potential disbenefits and how can these be avoided? How can we improve the design and development process to ensure that new technologies are 'user-driven'? How should we explore, visualize and map out new areas of technology in order to exploit its potential?

Venue characteristics. The conference will be hosted by the Simon Fraser University Gerontology Research Centre (GRC). The GRC has hosted many successful conferences, notably the 2001 World Congress of the International Association of Gerontology (IAG), which attracted over 4000 delegates from 75 countries, and the 2005 annual conference of the Environment and Design Research Association. The GRC has a strong research presence in the areas of: ageing and the built environment; health promotion/population health and ageing; changing demography and lifestyles; culture and ageing; and ageing and technology (www.sfu.ca/grc/). The local organizing committee is chaired by Andrew Sixsmith (current Director of the GRC) and includes Gloria Gutman (Past President of the IAG) and Andrew Wister (Chair of the Gerontology Department at SFU). An International advisory committee will comprise distinguished academics from across the world. Vancouver is an internationally renowned location for conferences. The Conference venue, the Marriott Pinnacle Hotel, is a modern full service facility situated close to Vancouver's spectacular waterfront.

The Hotel is within easy and safe walking distance of all major downtown sports, entertainment and cultural attractions, restaurants and shopping. 2010 is an Olympic year and Vancouver is the host to the world of winter sports 12th-28th February. The excitement of the Olympics makes 2010 the perfect year to host any international event.

Attractive Vancouver. As well as being a great conference venue, Vancouver has many attractions. It is a cosmopolitan city with great restaurants and nightlife, but offers easy access to beaches, water sports and hiking and biking in nearby Grouse and Cypress mountains. The city of Victoria and Vancouver Island are a short ferry ride away, or you can fly by float plane or helicopter directly from downtown. British Columbia and the Rockies are incomparably beautiful, offering access to all types of outdoor pursuits in the many provincial and national parks. Getting to Vancouver from Asia, North America and Europe via Vancouver International Airport is easy, with many direct international and low-cost flights each day (www.yvr.ca/). A high-speed train link to downtown is being built in time for the 2010 Olympics.

Provisional key dates for ISG 2010 are:

April 2009: Early bird registration
July 2009: Submission of abstracts
January 2010: Deadline for abstracts
April 2010: Program finalized
May 2010: Conference

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REPORT OF THE JAPANESE CHAPTER

The Japanese Chapter of ISG, which constitutes of 25 Japanese ISG members now, holds every December an annual meeting called 'Gerontechnology Forum'. The forum has two parts, invited lectures on a given theme and paper presentations on various topics related to gerontechnology. In 2007 a theme on tactile and haptic abilities and their aging effects was selected for the invited lectures. Because the use of tactile and haptic information has been increased in ICT field, the forum was timely and was attended by about 70 people. Health and physical exercise has been the theme of the 'Gerontechnology Forum 2008' (attendance 60 people). In addition to these activities, the board meeting of Japanese Chapter was held twice in 2008 where the discussions were held for managing and promoting the ISG Japanese Chapter. *Ken Sagawa*, Secretary, ISG Japanese Chapter
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