

Thematic Panel 4 – Technology for care and living: Solutions and challenges

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Technology for care and living: Solutions and challenges

Conveners and Discussants:

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Policymakers are facing the increased need for care supports without having corresponding resources from either the state or informal sources. The increasing number of older adults living alone or with a partner with disabilities implies growth in public and private expenditure on care.

This scenario is bringing about the need to prioritise care solutions. Technology is considered an important tool in overcoming this challenge, not in the least because technological ‘solutions’ to the ‘crisis’ of care are expected to help in controlling the costs of care. For instance, digitalization of care services is expected to improve communication and coordination among professionals, hence achieving efficiencies.

Approaches such as eHealth and mHealth, as well as the panoply of technological devices that are developed for individual use – ranging from wearable alarms to ambient assisted living and robotics – are raising new ethical and practical questions. The increasing availability of technologies is creating a scenario where policymakers need to decide what type of society we want, and where we need to invest: these necessitate difficult choices around priorities. For instance, if technology enables a home care worker to make 50 virtual visits a day, does this happen at the cost of relational aspects of care? In a more organic way, what kind of use are older adults and people with disabilities making of technologies in their everyday lives, perhaps in ways that are surprising and innovative?

The topics of interest for this panel include, but are not limited to:

- Are care technologies a priority for policy makers – and indeed for the potential users of such technologies? What kind of variance is there between ‘technology enthusiastic’ systems, and those where technology is

just emerging as a priority?

- What kind of questions arise around possible trade-offs between quality of care and the use of technologies? What are the trade-offs and opportunity costs of greater use of technology in other realms of life?
- What is the relationship between technology and various caregivers, both formal and informal? To what extent is technology embraced or critiqued by those who have to or are expected to engage with it most directly?
- How do older adults and people with disabilities engage with care and other technologies? What, if anything, is being done to bridge the digital divide?

We welcome both empirical (qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods) and conceptual/theoretical papers. We aspire to include papers from a variety of contexts and from scholars at different career stages.