Finally, Goodbye To "I've Fallen And I Can't Get Up"

By Shannon Ingram

Several years ago, I left a robust career in travel and technology marketing to move home to California to care for my octogenarian parents. I went from spending days working in a corner office with a view of the gorgeous Rocky Mountains to working in a small, two-bedroom apartment cooking, doing dishes, managing med's, driving to doctors' appointments, cleaning up "accidents" galore, spending hours in emergency rooms and nearly losing my mind as my parents sat in front of their TV all day.

When I moved Mom and Dad into assisted living, it wasn't much better. The exception was that I had the support of paid caregivers who were losing their minds caring for dozens of frail elderly residents, most of whom were sitting in front of their TVs all day.

Bored No More

With that background, plus eight years in senior living marketing, imagine how I felt a couple weeks ago when I learned about significant advances at Independa (a Senior Housing Forum partner). Independa offers remote engagement and care for people living at home or in senior communities. Independa leverages its software platform across something everyone knows and loves: TV. They've found a way to help people live safely at home, and more importantly, to support senior living communities by increasing Ops efficiencies and organizational effectiveness.

I first spoke with Independa Founder and CEO Kian Saneii at an industry conference in 2011 and was intrigued by his vision to embrace technology to solve senior care challenges. Six years later, he and his team have done just that.

"I Can't Get Up" - Not

"For the past 30 years, the brand for technology in eldercare was, 'I've fallen and I can't get up,'" says Saneii. "We took the opportunity of using tech to manage the challenges of caring for the elderly to renowned global design company IDEO. Today our customers and their residents benefit from the vision IDEO helped define, and was brought to fruition by Independa."

Saneii's team identified issues in the continuum – education, medications, isolation/socialization, dementia and compliance. They explored the person and his or her specific needs. "We knew we had to deliver the technology via something everyone knows how to use," Saneii explains. "Tablets and smart phones, with swipe gestures, charging challenges, and onscreen buttons are confusing to some people. You just can't rely on everyone knowing how to use or feel comfortable with the device, despite lots of training."

The TV is technology everyone knows how to use. LG did a global search to embed the strongest senior living tech solution into their commercial TVs. They now embed Independa software into their hospital and senior living TV models. The system was designed to be simple to use and learn, with no channel or input changes. Saneii adds, "We decided if a person can use a remote control, they're ready for Independa."

A Fragmented Industry

Saneii sees the industry as fragmented, with technology solutions developed in silos for medication management, remote patient monitoring and socialization, to name a few. "Payment systems are the reason for the fragmentation," he says. "I believe the confusion in the system involves the difference between the consumerization of healthcare and the medicalization of the consumer. For effective healthcare, the reality is, it's just as important to know if someone has spent four hours in the bathroom as it is to know if they stepped on a scale today."

Saneii believes care communities deserve a modern, simple and cost-effective technology solution that will increase occupancy, staff efficiency and resident engagement while creating a more connected environment. For the senior living industry, Independa enables resident TVs. Residents can easily see their dinner menus, search and select activities from the community calendars, receive broadcast messages ranging from dinner reminders to storm warnings, and much more, all from their TVs.

Alerts in red, orange and yellow categories transmit to staff and designated family members or guardians. "It's all in the cloud, at the click of a button. It takes a huge burden off operations by lessening the tasks of caregivers and staff," says Saneii.

An Award-Winning Formula

Independa's combination of cloud-based services, ease of use and deployment, integrated monitoring and LG TV embedded solutions has made it a winning formula for top industry recognition. The company has been named "#1 Technology in Senior Care" by CES (Consumer Electronics and Technology Tradeshow), earned the coveted CES Innovation Award in the "Tech for a Better World" category and designated as "a Brilliant Company" by Entrepreneur Magazine.

If I had the innovative and holistic support of Independa when I was caring for my parents, I doubt I would have needed Prozac! If the AL communities I worked with had Independa, I'm guessing our caregiver turnover would have been lower. Stay tuned for more great stories about how Independa is changing lives top and bottom line benefits at senior living communities.

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