



# Stop Waking Me Up! I'm Sleeping, Damn It!

*By Susan Saldibar*

Do senior living communities need to do a better job of balancing safety with privacy?

Well, we all know what can happen when a senior resident forgets to turn off the stove or attempts to walk from point A to point B without a cane or walker. Avoiding these potentially disasters is part of what keeps operators up at night. So we all get it. Safety is huge.

At what point, however, in the name of “safety” do we seriously invade the personal space and privacy of residents? And is it, given today’s technology, avoidable?

The privacy versus safety question came up during a recent conversation I had with Jacquie Brennan, VP of [Vigil Health Solutions](#) (a Senior Housing Forum partner).

**It doesn't have to be a “safety versus privacy” issue anymore. You can have both.**

These days “monitoring” is becoming more common and more accepted. There is even talk of real time video to watch residents in communities to alert staff in emergencies. Wearables such as bands, bracelets and tags have gone from being considered “restrictive” to cool, new technology. But with all this monitoring going on, what about privacy? I certainly wouldn't want a video camera in my bedroom so why would a resident with dementia be okay with that?

I asked Jacquie about Vigil’s ground-breaking work with sensors and alert technology. How can monitoring without intrusive video be just as effective (or even more effective)? While she can only speak for Vigil Health Solutions, here’s an example of two residents that Jacquie gave me which I found interesting:

Sylvia:

- Goes to bed at night and tends to sleep well
- May occasionally get up to go to the bathroom
- Has no issues toileting so can do so independently
- Goes back to bed and back to sleep

Joseph:

- Has trouble sleeping
- Gets up frequently in the night and often stays up for awhile
- Occasionally leaves his room and may get disoriented
- Has gone into other resident rooms at night accidentally

The Vigil Memory Care System allows staff to set rules based on residents’ individual behavior patterns. For Sylvia, the system may be programmed to only alert if she does not come out of the bathroom within 15 minutes. Staff know that, while Sylvia is capable of going to the bathroom independently, if she doesn’t come out of the bathroom for an unusually long period of time she may need help. Sylvia now has the privacy to get up, go to the bathroom and go back to bed independently. And, if for some reason she needs help, staff will be alerted.

For Joseph, the concern is not that he is up at night, it’s when he leaves his room. If he is in his room, whether in bed or not, he is safe and free to have that level of privacy. So the system would be set to only alert if he left his room. That way the staff can ensure his safety and prevent him from disrupting his neighbors.

Different people, different behaviors. But both keep their privacy and dignity intact. (And zero videos!)

## **“I was sleeping. Until you woke me up to see if I was.”**

Respecting privacy and treating residents with dignity is becoming more important, not less. The baby boomer “me” generation (and I am one) is not going to want to be hovered over 24/7. When I said that to Jacquie, she laughed. Then she reminded me of the old story about the guy who tells the nurse “Stop waking me up to see if I’m asleep!”

Great news. Now you don’t have to.

You can find out more about Vigil Health Solutions Memory Care System by visiting their [website](#).



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