



## Don't Love or Hate AI: Do This Instead

By Susan Saldibar

AI is starting to pop up everywhere. We've seen some of the amazing things it's doing to help aging adults stay in their own homes longer. But there is also plenty of potential for use in senior living communities.

I caught up recently with Jacquie Brennan, VP of Operations and Steven Smith, VP of Development for [Vigil Health Solutions](#) (a Senior Housing Forum partner). As a developer who keeps on top of all the latest technology, Steven has certainly noticed the influx of AI applications at recent conferences. Not all are ready for prime time yet, he tells me, but there's still a lot of creativity on display.

I asked Jacquie and Steven what senior living communities should make of all this. But, first, we talked a little about what's out there. And there's plenty. Here are four that are getting a lot of attention:

- **Self-driving cars:** Major potential here for seniors who can no longer drive. While there remains much work to be done, they've come a long way. We've all heard about the Google test car crashes. But, as Jacquie points out, "Many naysayers fail to mention the many car accidents humans cause!"
- **Interactive "companions":** These are interactive robot-like stands with video screens that remind seniors when to take medications and make suggestions as to activities they may like or when to set up a Skype session with a relative or friend.
- **Robotic pets:** Along the same lines as the "companions", these are lifelike dogs and cats, which actually "breathe and move". They also do things like remind seniors when to take medications. They can even help find a lost pair of glasses.
- **Human pose estimation:** A confusing name for an AI application involving special cameras which record movement of seniors and "deep learn" behavior patterns. Based on this collected information they are able to detect a fall or even movement that could lead to a fall. This assumes, of course, that they have collected sufficient intelligence (more on that below).

As cool as these applications are, AI is not quite ready to replace human judgement and may never be in some people's minds. It all depends on what people believe is an acceptable threshold for error. We know that human caregivers can make mistakes and can't always be in the right place at the right time. But what happens if a robot gives a resident the wrong advice? What happens if the resident fails to take his or her medications? What if the "fall detection" doesn't detect the fall?

Jacque mentioned an example where a fall detection system didn't alert staff of a fall in a community due to the fact that resident was new and the system hadn't had enough time to learn and analyze their behavior. Fortunately, the staff were alerted to the fall through the Vigil System's bed exit monitoring. The fact that the AI system had not had time to learn the resident's behavior is very fair as long as the community knows that this learning period exists and as long as they have other systems in place as safe guards.

### **So, as with all new technologies, operators need to be aware of the limitations.**

Given the relative newness of AI applications, I asked Jacque and Steven how communities should approach AI and how they can decide what makes sense for their environments. Here are their suggestions:

1. Look for real life references for all new technology products. Studies are great, but if it hasn't been in use in the real world there may be complications.
2. If you are an early adopter, be prepared to be part of a company's learning curve. You may, without realizing it, be a beta-tester. Have the right mindset going in and be willing to work with the vendor to get what you want.
3. Always ensure that you have time-tested products in place to catch things the new AI might miss. After all, even Google's self-driving cars still use real drivers to monitor their performance.

As AI continues to make its way into more and more devices in the general world it stands to reason it will have applications in senior care as well. It's exciting to think of the possibilities for the future and Steven says that Vigil will continue its development in AI. The key is to ensure that, while these new applications are being tested, that communities are still relying on trusted processes, systems and technologies.



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