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How One Startup Is Using Connected Tech To Help The Elderly Lead Independent Lives



Nicholas Fearn Contributor 

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Jim Patience. ANTHROPOS

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All over the world, countries are facing the reality of rapidly expanding aging populations. In the U.K. alone, there are 15 million people aged 60 or more, and they'll account for 29% of the population over the next 20 years. This is resulting in immense social challenges.

“As we age and live longer, we're increasingly likely to require additional care. There are increasing challenges impacting care with cuts to local authority budgets, more of us requiring care and other factors that will severely impact the sector. Improving the sector is one of the major challenges facing society,” says Jim Patience, CEO of Anthropos.

Founded in 2017, Chippenham-based Anthropos is working to connect the dots in social care to improve outcomes and help people stay well for longer. Its connected platform combines sensors and devices to analyze behavior patterns of vulnerable individuals in their homes, before using artificial intelligence to identify meaningful changes and alert family members and care providers.

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“One of the challenges is that elderly people who require assistance often don't ask for it until it's too late, because they don't want to be seen as a burden on those around them,” says Patience. “At the same time, the desire to retain independence and stay in their home means that they don't want to move. Even if they have care support, it is only for a limited period of time each day; a lot happens when family or a carer aren't there.”

According to Patience, a big driver for Anthropos was the personal experiences the team had with social care and watching family members need complex levels of care. He says: “Knowing what is happening when a carer isn't there can help carers to better understand the level of care needed and make changes that improve quality of life.”

By analyzing data collected by internet-enabled devices and sensors, Anthropos is able to provide a better picture of the pattern behavior of an individual in their home. The platform monitors and understands this data to report on changes that could indicate whether someone needs support.

Patience continues: “Anthropos is applying its technology to social care to support improvements in the quality of care planning and delivery by providing alerts and insights. The number one goal is to support older people to stay in their homes for longer. The platform helps provide family members with the reassurance that their loved ones are okay, notify them if something has gone wrong and warn them if something is changing.”

Last year, Anthropos partnered with domiciliary support company Home Instead Senior Care on a year-long trial. In light of its success, the platform is being rolled out across 200 franchises in the U.K.

Patience says: “The platform was able to not only detect when some participants of the trial were developing health conditions but also looked for signs of dementia or problems with hydration and nutrition. The actionable insight provided by Anthropos meant that the care outcomes for the people improved.”

Tracy Parkes, a user from Wirral, says: “I am not there all the time. I’m working, I’ve got my own family. It’s nice to know that someone’s there keeping an eye on them (my parents). It gives a bit of relief I think, especially with having the app on the phone, because we can keep checking it. I am so used to them saying they are fine, they’re coping, but they weren’t. I can see for myself they’re not.”

While its platform is already being rolled out, Anthropos hopes to continue developing the service through ongoing research and development initiatives. The firm is collaborating with academic innovators and researchers in eight leading institutions, including the University of Oxford, Imperial College London, The University of Warwick and the University of Twente in the Netherlands, to improve the technology. And software is also being reviewed by the NHS trusts, local authorities and retirement living companies, which could spearhead its adoption across the health system.

Patience concludes: “The longer-term goals are related to the use of data rather than just adding devices and sensors. With a greater volume of data, collected over a longer period of time it will be possible to support pre-emptive care decisions by detecting long-range changes in individual behavior and comparing individual data to cohort data. It may also be possible to improve medical testing by increasing the frequency of measurement of data.”

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Nicholas Fearn

I'm a freelance journalist with experience reporting on technology, digital culture and business. My work has appeared on Engadget, Lifehacker, Gizmodo, TechRadar, The ... **Read More**