



# **Ethical issues linked to the use of AT in residential care settings**

**Dianne Gove**

**Luxembourg, 1 October 2010**

# Topics of today's presentation

1. the European Dementia Ethics Network (EDEN)
2. assistive technology and ethics
3. ethical issues linked to the use of AT in residential care
  - tracking and surveillance
  - recreation and well-being
4. implications of AT for professional carers

# 1. The European Dementia Ethics Network (EDEN)

- Original idea: Michael Schmieder
- Initial funding: German Ministry of Health
- Initial duration of the project: 1 year (extended)
- Main topic: ethical issues linked to the care of people with dementia
- Current theme: the use of assistive technology
- Literature review, background information on ethics and assistive technology and guidelines

# The working group on AT

- Participants from the working group
  - Alistair Niemeijer, the Netherlands
  - Cees Hertogh, the Netherlands
  - Dianne Gove, Luxembourg (Alzheimer Europe)
  - Heike von Lützu-Hohlbein, Germany
  - Inger Hagen, Norway
  - Jean Georges, Luxembourg (Alzheimer Europe)
  - James and Maureen McKillop, Scotland
  - Maria McManus, Ireland
  - Luiza Spiru, Romania
  - Päivi Topo, Finland
  - Sirkkaliisa Heimonen, Finland
  - Stefania Kapronczay, Hungary

# The steering committee

- Bénédicte Gombault, Belgium
- Christian Berringer, Germany
- Cornelia Reitberger, Germany
- Mary Marshall, Scotland
- Michael Schmieder, Switzerland
- Sabine Jansen, Germany
- Sigurd Sparr, Norway
- Matthias von Schwanenflügel, Germany
- Alain Franco, France
- Celso Pontes, Portugal
- François Blanchard, France
- Iva Holmerova, Czech Republic
- Jean Georges (Alzheimer Europe)
- Kati Juva, Finland
- Magda Aelvoet, Belgium
- Malou Kapgen, Luxembourg

## 2. Assistive technology and ethics

# What is assistive technology?

- Assistive technology is the term used to describe devices or systems which allow people to perform tasks which they would otherwise be unable to do, or to increase the ease and safety with which tasks can be performed (Royal Commission on Long-Term Care, 1999).

# What do we mean by ethics?

Ethics is a branch of philosophy which seeks to address issues related to concepts of right and wrong. It is sometimes referred to as moral philosophy and can be broadly divided into four subject areas which are as follows:

- Meta-ethics
- Descriptive ethics
- Normative ethics
- Applied ethics





# Four things that should not be unquestioningly equated with ethics

- Acting in accordance with one feelings
- Religion
- Respecting laws
- What society accepts

(Source: Verlasquez et al., 1987)

# What are ethical principles?

**Expressions of agreed values which serve to guide people's actions in order to achieve the best possible ethical outcome, thereby encouraging people to consider the broader context and respect other people rather than being preoccupied with their own interests**

**(Source: State of Victoria, 2006)**

## Which ethical principles (and related concepts) did we consider for our work on AT?

- Autonomy
- Beneficence
- Non-maleficence
- Justice/equity
- Vulnerability
- Solidarity/inter-dependency
- Personhood
- Integrity
- Privacy
- Dignity
- Relationships
- Quality of life

### 3. The ethical use of AT in residential care settings



## i. Tracking and surveillance devices or systems

- tracking devices
- tagging devices
- movement detectors
- video monitoring



# Related ethical issues

- a) Balancing autonomy and safety**
- b) Respecting personhood /avoiding devaluation and stigmatization**
- c) Proportionality, dignity, privacy and confidentiality**

## a) balancing autonomy and safety

- Autonomy
- Freedom of movement
- Beneficence
- Improved quality of life (exercise, social contact, self-esteem etc.)

### Versus

- Deprivation of freedom of movement
- Safety
- Increased dependency
- Frustration
- Social control/coercion
- Concerns about litigation in case of harm



## ***a few points to consider....***

- **Allowing for some degree of risk**
- **Communicating with all concerned**
- **Addressing staff shortages**
- **Appropriate and timely use of AT**



## **b) respecting personhood/avoiding devaluation and stigmatization**

### **Link and Phelan's conceptualization of stigma (the main components)**

- Identification and labelling of difference
- Attaching negative attributes and stereotypes
- Cognitive separation
- Loss of status and discrimination
- Power relations

### **Possible consequences:**

Self-stigmatization, low self-esteem, withdrawal, shame, depression, devaluation, humiliation etc.

## ***a few points to consider...***

### **The importance of:**

- meanings
- how people feel about the use of the device
- the visual aspect of the device of system
- its concealability
- control/the exercise of power
- how staff respond to alerts/signals
- attitudes towards users
- respecting all residents

## c) proportionality, dignity, privacy and confidentiality

- Proportionality/justification
- Drawing attention to deficiencies/dignity
- Privacy
- Confidentiality



## ii AT for recreation, interaction and well-being

- socially assistive robotics
- devices/tools to facilitate social interaction and promote autonomy
- computerized leisure activities



# Possible ethical implications

AT for recreation, interaction and well-being

- Quality of life
- Safety
- Autonomy
- Attachment
- Dignity



# What about healthcare staff?

- Their privacy
- Fears about litigation procedures
- Training and advice
- Balancing the needs and rights of all residents
- Providing more time to interact socially with residents



Thank you for your attention