



## KEEPING IN TOUCH: TECHNOLOGY TRUMPS SENIORS' ISOLATION

compiled by Helen Peterson

Studies have shown that social isolation among seniors is associated with increased rates of depression and can lead to a shorter lifespan. In fact, those over the age of 65 consistently rank relationships with family and friends second only to health as the most important area of life.

The newly launched Claris Companion aims to address both of these issues by improving the wellbeing of seniors and promoting self-managed care. With deeply local roots, the Companion was developed in Vancouver by Claris Healthcare.

"We're living in an age when most families use some form of digital technology to communicate, whether it's email, text, video chat or social media," says Geof Auchinleck, co-founder and CEO of Claris Healthcare. "Unfortunately many seniors are left out of the conversations because they're not comfortable with or unable to use technology."

Auchinleck designed it so family members or caregivers could control how the device works through a secure, easy-to-use website. "Unlike other computers, tablets or devices, Claris Companion was designed specifically for seniors who may not be comfortable with technology, by combining the familiar aesthetics of both a 1950's TV and bamboo picture frame," he says. Functionally, seniors find it easy to use because of the large buttons and text, amplified speakers, and hassle-free charging dock, he adds.

Features and alerts can be set remotely by selecting from a few simple options, and once personalized, the Companion automatically displays



new family photos, emails and texts, as well as medication reminders, wellness surveys and exercise videos. Family members can also receive check-in and "call me" notifications – keeping them apprised of their loved one's daily activity and wellbeing.

"A typical client who would benefit from this product is, say, a 55-year-old daughter and an 85-year-old mother, says Paul Sharman, co-founder and COO. "Once trained on the easy system, it means that the daughter can keep updated on Mom's daily situation, in tandem with any in-person visits.

"It's certainly not intended to replace the human touch, but, as we all have busy lives, it's great to know that with the touch of a screen the two can have instant peace of mind," Sharman says. "It

helps allow aging in place, but in a safer way."

The tablet itself runs on a Samsung Android platform and plans are in the works for a Skype add-on, which will enhance the communication ability further. There are several programs clients can buy into that range from purchasing the unit with an ongoing monthly plan to outright purchase with no monthly fees for the duration of the contract.

For more information, visit: [clariscompanion.com](http://clariscompanion.com) to see a video of how the product / service works.

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