

# “Aging in Place”

Enabling Older Persons to Choose Where  
and How they Will Live their Lives

Smart Growth Summit

Thursday, August 18, 2011

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Charles Landry, PhD

337-504-285

# 'Aging in Place' in Simple Terms

- 'Aging in Place' means being able to grow older without having to move from that place we call home.
- It means to be able to remain in that place for our lifetime

# “Aging in Place”

## What People Want

- We are now seeing the largest flood of people in history entering the senior citizen ranks.
- This generation will work longer, prefer to age-in-place and desire more active retirement scenarios.
- Nearly 90% of Americans 45 years of age and older say they would like to remain in their homes as long as possible (AARP 2003).

# What People Need to Age in Place

- As we age we may experience changes in health that result in the need for assistance with daily activities such as bathing, dressing, walking, getting in and out of bed, eating, and toileting.
- We may also need assistance with transportation, household chores, paying bills, and shopping.
- We may no longer be able to live independently without such assistance.
- The need may arise from a progressive chronic illness such as Parkinson's disease or Alzheimer's disease, or a sudden change due to a debilitating accident or health related event, such as a stroke

# Goals to Implementing An Aging in Place Approach

- To maximize the older person's ability to live as independently as possible
- To enhance their quality of life so they are comfortable in their environment and more able to participate in activities both in their homes and in their communities.
- To encourage individuals who plan to stay in their homes as they age to make the necessary modifications NOW to ensure their ability to age in place.
- To encourage those who are seeking to relocate to select housing that offers them the features of universal design and accessibility that will enable them to age in place.

# Hair on Fire!!! - Scenarios Challenges to Aging in Place

- Discharge from rehab or a hospital without adequate supporting services.
- Death of a spouse (need help or can't live alone)
- Advancing Alzheimer's Disease or Dementia (can't live alone or spouse/caregiver needs help)
- Progression of physical limitations (vision or hearing loss, arthritis, Parkinson's, mobility)
- Adult children/seniors move away
- Caregiver breakdown
- Insufficient income or resources to maintain home

# What Aging in America Should Be

- We want homes to grow old in
- We want to be able to choose that home
- In supportive and age-friendly communities
- With access to transportation, recreation, health care, shopping, family and friends
- So we may be able to participate in the life of our community

# Age-friendly, Barrier-free Housing: The Concept of Universal Design

- Term created by Ronald L. Mace, an architect and educator who died in 1998.
- Posits that housing should work for people of all ages, all sizes, and all abilities.
- It is the conventional home environment that creates the disability, not the person. (Peter Pan Homes).
- Incorporates a holistic view of the individual and their changing abilities and needs across their lifespan.

# Impact of Universal Design

- Universal Design modifications increase:
  - Safety
  - Enhance comfort
  - Increase the likelihood of individuals remaining independent in their home and community through the years ahead
- Simple design modifications or changes can prevent one-third of all home accidents

# Common Universal Design Features

- No-step entry
- One story living
- Wide doorways
- Extra floor space
- Adequate turn space for wheelchair & walkers
- Thresholds that are flush
- Lever door handles and rocker light switches
- Adequate floor space

# Universal Design Features Cont'd

- Kitchen Design Features
  - Accessible cabinets (lowers, pull-outs, etc.)
  - Task specific lighting
  - Accessible sink and storage
  - Accessible appliances (front end controls, front end loaded)
- Bathroom Design Features
  - Bathing options (walk in tubs, barrier-free showers)
  - Accessible toilet and sink
  - Non-slip surfaces
  - Emergency call system
  - Grab bars at toilet, tub and shower units

# Beyond Universal Design

- The home is more than where we live.
- It must be an evolving services platform to keep us independent, connected and healthy.
- Universal design alone is not enough
- To enable individuals to Age in Place we must find ways to:
  - Manage disease and incapacity
  - Overcome social isolation
  - Monitor their safety
  - Promote their wellness by motivating healthy behaviors
  - And to do all of this in an affordable and cost effective way
- Note: The impact of social isolation on human beings is the same as smoking.

# Aging in Place and Telehealth

- Underlying Principle:
  - Aging in Place is no longer just a desire but a necessity
  - Technology is necessary to age in place
- Drivers
  - Containing Costs
  - Availability of affordable and user-friendly systems
  - Technology-aware and receptive caregivers

# Telehealth: Managing Chronic Disease and Promoting Wellness

- Personal Emergency Response Systems
- Vital signs monitoring
- Passive behavioral monitoring
- Medication management
  - From reminders to administration
- Social Connectedness
  - Facebook for Seniors, Virtual Senior Centers
- Cognitive Fitness – brain stimulation
- Wellness coaching – games and exercise

# Benefits of Technology

- New technology allows us to manage disease in the home, monitor our safety, and motivate healthy behaviors.
- Technology can lever scarce resources especially given caregiver shortages and geographically disconnected families.
- Video-enabled telemedicine is enabling older adults to connect with clinicians anywhere in the world to manage chronic disease at home.

# Summary

## The Future We Face

- A growing elderly population
- A population that wants to remain in their homes as they age
- An existing stock of “Peter Pan Homes”
- The need to do what we can to minimize the cost of chronic disease by providing care at the “lowest cost” site of care - - - the home
- The need to modify existing homes and utilize modern telemedicine technology so we can successfully lever our limited financial and human resources.