



# RHarper Consulting Update

## The Future of Technology – It’s Already Here



I have had the opportunity recently to look at some of the new emergency alert technology available to senior living communities, and it is striking how far the industry has come in the past few years. Wall-mounted pull cords in the bathrooms and bedrooms are so 1950! Today, with new wireless technology and sensor packages, operators can be much more proactive in not only providing emergency calls, but adaptive learning of residents living habits to alert operators to changes in behavior that may indicate upcoming needs for residents.

The industry is making huge strides with technology that is on the shelf right now:

**Accelerometers** – the use of these devices in wristbands or necklaces provides information to operators about early stumbles and minor falls, and warns that residents may be at increased risk for a serious fall.

**Metrics** – tracking the response time of a care giver from the time the alert is received to the time they reach the resident’s side provides valuable information to management on how well our staffs are implementing and executing their assigned tasks that directly impact quality of care.

**Portals** – Systems today provide web-based portals where resident families or others off site can monitor the residents’ activity and health related measurable. This is a value-added service which provides a great source of additional revenue, and greatly increases peace of mind for family members living outside the area.

In talking with Jim Anderson of Care Technology Systems, Inc., I hear that the biggest obstacle to more rapid implementation of these systems is the “head in the sand” attitude of many operators. They fear having *too much* information, and being held liable for not reacting to it. I doubt that defense will hold up either in civil court or the court of public opinion. The savvy operators are adapting this technology, using it to create a competitive advantage for their communities, and generating improved occupancies and revenue. They are also improving their training and monitoring to ensure that their care staff is responsive.

The communities that are embracing these new technologies believe they have an affirmative defense, because they have armed themselves with the best tools available to monitor residents. These providers also see technology as a great marketing device, one which gives them an advantage with families and other decision-makers. The trend has already started, and if your community is not on the leading edge, you will eventually have to adapt or be left behind.

This technology can be a game-changer, particularly in the current environment, where we are going outside the campus to provide CCRCs without walls or enhanced home health services. Objective monitoring, accessible to healthcare providers and family members, provides robust support for the decision to move residents from their homes to a more appropriate level of care.

The technology revolution is finally here in senior housing, and you can’t hide your head in the sand any longer. If you expect to stay competitive, it’s vital that you start – today! - addressing care-related technology in your capital budgets and learning about the many services it can provide your residents, care staffs, and families.

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*RHarper Consulting Group provides development consulting, program management, and owner representation services focused on the senior living and mixed use sectors. In addition, Mr. Harper is also a listed mediator and arbitrator providing dispute resolution services for the construction and real estate industries.*

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