

Wanderers welcome

Balancing autonomy with resident dignity continues to be a challenge for most providers. Fortunately, technology-based tools make it easier to watch residents

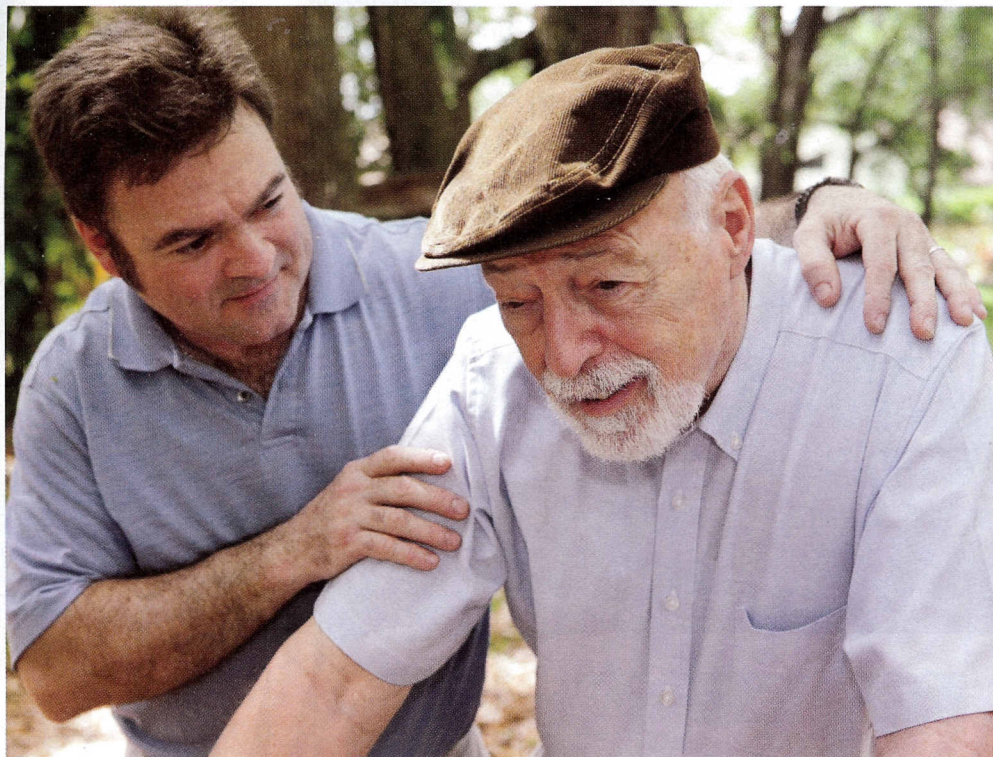


Photo: iStockphoto

Balancing independence with safety is a constant operational challenge.

By Julie E. Williamson

As more seniors enter assisted living with mild to moderate dementia, operators are faced with a somewhat daunting dilemma: how they can keep residents who tend to wander safe, without stripping them of their independence and freedom to roam the community they call home.

While managing wander-prone residents can indeed prove challenging, increasingly reliable technologies are helping staff to keep tabs on the whereabouts of at-risk residents. These systems

help prevent elopement and other potentially dangerous wandering incidents that can put residents' health and providers' bottom lines at risk.

Enhanced system flexibility, user-friendly functionality and discreet alerts are at the heart of today's leading wander management solutions, sources say.

"Most of these systems can be set to not be alerted unless a [resident] goes in restricted areas. These security solutions keep track of [resident] wandering, but also give residents their inde-

pendence," explains Alan Bingham, senior marketing manager, AliMed Inc., Dedham, MA.

In assisted living—where cognitive function can vary widely from one resident to the next—there's a strong, collective desire by the senior population to reside in a setting that fosters autonomy. Operators, understandably, are seeking wander management solutions that afford a greater level of flexibility and customization.

Such technologies could make the difference between allowing a high-risk wanderer to stay in assisted living, as opposed to transferring such a resident to a more

secure skilled nursing facility.

"The risks and personal needs associated with effectively managing the wide variety of elopement or wandering situations demand a range of affordable and customizable solutions, even for those that are not an explicit wander risk per se," notes Kelly Besecker, vice president of sales and marketing, AFrame Digital Inc., Reston, VA.

Predicting behavior

Perhaps an administrator wants to know if a particular resident goes outside when the weather is below freezing, so they can be sure they are not out too long, she explains, or maybe there's a need to monitor a frail, yet still independent resident who hasn't returned home by an expected time.

"The ability to personalize options allows caregivers to have predictive insights to enable proactive care for a given resident's specific needs," Besecker notes.

Today's wander management technologies are also more affordable—and increasingly discreet.

"Dignity and privacy are major concerns. The system should be designed in line with the high-end designs of assisted living communities, and should support the quiet environment trend," says Jon Ross, general manager, HomeFree Systems, Milwaukee.

Increasingly, solutions that allow staff to set up "hot zones" are becoming more popular, according to Besecker, because staff can redirect residents who enter a predetermined off-limits zone. Exit alerts

and off-campus alerts also can be set on or off for an individual or group of residents.

"The system also can trigger door locks and other mechanisms to reduce the risk of elopement," Besecker says, adding that silent alerts delivered in real time to staff pagers, smart phones or any other voice or data device already in use in the facility can help ensure immediate action by staff, without the need for disruptive, dignity-robbing alarms.

"Some people just like to wander and that isn't necessarily a bad thing."

Amy Boulware, RN
Levindale's Hebrew Geriatric Center

Preventing dangerous wandering and elopement is indeed critical, but more operators are opting for technology that can offer a second line of defense. Cellular-based tracking solutions, which operate via residents who wear a watch-like device that can be precisely located virtually anywhere within an existing cellular network, is one example of this added layer of protection.

"This cellular-based system can work indoors or outdoors, and can locate people quickly and precisely, even in buildings or places that would typically interfere with GPS locators," says Jim Nalley, chief executive officer of EmFinders, Frisco, TX. The company's EmSecQ technology, developed in collaboration with law enforcement, is activated by a caregiver and utilizes the 9-1-1 emergency system.

Radio frequency identification and global position systems also are gaining momentum in the wander management segment.

"Extending the personal emergency response systems, there are systems on the market that can provide GPS tracking to help find individuals who end up wandering from a facility," says Brian Jones,

director, Aware Home Research Initiative, and senior research engineer for Georgia Tech's Interactive Media Technology Center in Atlanta. "These technologies are more reliable than those we have seen in the past."

Resident compliance is another critical factor. As sources explain, residents might try to tamper with or dismantle a wander management system, or they might

attempt to remove the wristbands that track their location.

"Being able to know when the device is being worn or not is essential for any resident we want to feel secure," says Besecker.

Because of the challenges associated with resident compliance, some vendors are now opting for GPS or RFID tags that can be easily and unobtrusively attached to a resident. The GPS or RFID

device then alerts and guides the caregiver in the direction of the resident.

"Things like a departure alert placed above a doorway keeps track of [residents] and alerts a caregiver when there is unwanted wandering. Simple systems, such as mats that can be placed at doorways, also monitor resident wandering and prevent elopement," Bingham says.

**Fragrance Free.
Alcohol Free.**

**Free is
for me.**



Introducing

SANI-CLOTH® AF
GERMICIDAL DISPOSABLE WIPE

**THE FIRST AND ONLY ALCOHOL FREE, QUAT BASED
DISINFECTANT WIPE WITH A 3 MINUTE KILL TIME.**

- **SANI-CLOTH STRONG** - Effective against 25 microorganisms, including relevant MDROs and bloodborne pathogens, in 3 minutes or less¹
- **FRAGRANCE FREE** - Ideal around residents & healthcare workers with respiratory conditions or sensitivities
- **ALCOHOL FREE** - Perfect for shared medical equipment and other hard, non-porous surfaces sensitive to alcohol



EPA Reg. No. 9480-5

SANI-CLOTH® AF, the Newest
Addition to the **SANI-CLOTH®** Brand...
The #1 Disinfectant Wipe in Healthcare²

To receive a **FREE** sample, go to:
www.pdi.com/saniclothAF



OUR PASSION IS PREVENTION™

¹ See Technical Data Bulletin for complete list. ² GHX Intelligence Data 2010
May contain trace amounts of alcohol (less than 0.016%).
Copyright © 2011 Professional Disposables International, Inc. Sani-Cloth®
is a registered trademark of Professional Disposables International, Inc.
19480