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A theoretical grounding for AgeTech research

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A theoretical grounding for AgeTech research: the inclusion of older people as experiential stakeholders
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Purpose As the field of AgeTech research expands, and more projects and networks are formed to harness the potential of technology to improve health, wellbeing, social participation and work opportunities for older people, a call for more theoretically grounded research has surfaced (Sixsmith et al., 2020). This theoretical emphasis is based on the notion that current projects can run the risk of producing technologies that do not reach the market and thereby solve problems for which they were designed. A key reason appears to be relative inattention to the inclusion of older people as key partners within the research process. **Method** Taking a transdisciplinary approach (Boger et al., 2017) to AgeTech necessitates the integration of different theoretical perspectives from relevant disciplinary, cross-sectoral and experiential knowledge bases such that innovative conceptual models can be formed and drive research towards real world impact (Sixsmith et al., 2020). The inclusion of older people alongside health and social care practitioners can ensure that co-created technological products are accessible, intuitive, appropriate and 'fit for purpose' (Sixsmith et al., 2020). While much AgeTech research integrally involves professional and practitioner stakeholders, older people often tend to be treated as information providers i.e. subjects from which to collect data, rather than decision-makers. This may result in impractical technology solutions that leaves older people without supports and perhaps negatively impacting their quality-of-life. **Results and Discussion** One explanation might revolve around Phoenix's theory of normalized absence and pathologized presence (Phoenix, 1987) where older people are often less visible in the research world. Their absence in research as decision-makers is thus normalized. Yet, when they are visible within research, it is often as the 'problem population,' subsequently pathologizing their presence. Framing the inclusion of older people through Phoenix's theory enables us to better understand our own behavioral and attitudinal patterns to help us better address social and health inequities that can arise from our work. The AGE-WELL Network of Centers of Excellence has forefronted research initiatives that center on the inclusion of people as research partners across their funded AgeTech projects (i.e. OA-INVOLVE) (Sixsmith et al., 2020); and has integrated a transdisciplinary approach to innovate technological solutions through inclusive practices. Bringing a theoretical perspective to inclusion in AgingTech research can reveal new ways to encourage the visibility of older people to ensure their knowledge is translated into technology design.

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