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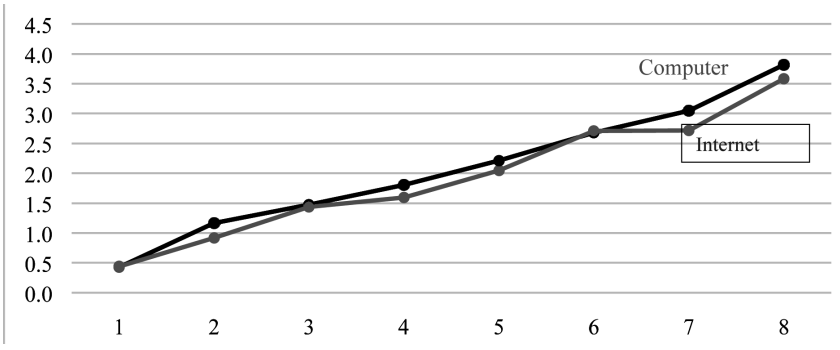
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Digital Ageing! Is it an issue of Turkey?

Digital ageing is on the agenda of developed countries including many different aspects like aged people's using digital tools and digitalization using in health services for aged people. This global discussion was the main theme of the last (20th) International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics Congress (IAGG)' theme which was held in Seoul, Korea between 23 and 27 June, 2013 was on Digital Aging with the title of "*Digital Aging: New Horizon for All Age*" (1).

When a similar question like *"Is digital ageing an issue of Turkey?"* is asked, one needs to analyze current scientific data to understand the situation in our country.

According to the Turkish Statistical Institute data, access to Internet in 2012 was found to be 47.2% for any age. Thus, as shown in the Figure, the percentage declines to 3.6% among the 65 years of age and older people (2). Those of who are curious on the developed world, 56% of 65 years of age and older adults in the United States are connected to and use the Internet. All adults' frequency has been found to be 85% (3).



Source: 2

Figure 1— Computer and Internet Use of 65 Years of Age and Older People, Turkey (2004-2012) (%)

The dynamics of Internet use should be understood before going further. Educational level, health literacy level, demographic and socio-economic status, having a living child, having a living sibling, and having more than one chronic disease increased Internet use in elderly. Nevertheless, as expected, having a diagnosis of Alzheimer Disease or dementia lowered Internet use. The elderly use Internet basically communication with those in their social networks, maintenance of geographically dispersed connections, convenience and benefits of searching for and increased learning from health-related information, increased ability to research non-health-related information, read news/magazines/books, and engage in continuing education activities, increased awareness of and connection to interest/support/hobby groups, events, and resources in their immediate and global communities, convenience of online shopping, banking, travel arrangements, and related information (4,5). To know these facts figures are important because, pro-



posed/aimed success in digitalization use in health could not have been possible without providing the digital based services accessible for each individual including elderly. Elderly people are more successful in utilizing Electronic health (e-Health) services if they are familiar with and/or have experience on computer/Internet use compared to non-users (6). Every aged person should be able to use digital and Internet facilities without any discrimination as a first step. Otherwise, not accessing the facilities might have been a "first" block and create a way of discrimination at the beginning. Thus, e-Health has become a very important area of focus and activity in multiple domains, such as health promotion, health care and maintenance, public health, medical science, health service (7). The current data shows that even though their use of Information and Communication Technologies is increasing, there is still a significant age-based digital divide (8).

Being aware of our responsibilities on promoting the situation on the discussion theme, one should take the items below in this regard (7):

1. More scientific based data should be produced; *conflicting results!*
2. The risk of not being accessible for every individual equally!
3. Expensive services
4. Insufficient service providers in number
5. Providing user friendly technology is difficult, more difficult for the aged population
   - Technology adaptation in aged population is difficult
6. Ethical issues (data sharing, informed consent issues, etc)
7. Security and privacy are important requirements for health information systems
   - Patients' privacy is protected by law in many countries.

Returning back to the question in the very beginning of this discussion *"Is Digital Aging an Issue of Turkey?"*, the undoubted answer should be "*yes*". However, the technology related infrastructure should be established taking today's questions into account. Otherwise, the proposed system has the risk of unsuccessful end(s) especially for the developing countries. As a last note, all kinds of humanitarian needs including patient-doctor communication should be in the heart of any newly proposed model.

Before conclusion, a couple of information on IAGG and its routine congress agenda can be mentioned. IAGG organizes congresses every four years globally, which San Francisco, USA will host the 21th IAGG Congress. Written in its preamble, IAGG's mission is *to promote the highest levels of achievement in gerontological research and training worldwide, and to interact with other international, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations in the promotion of gerontological interests globally and on behalf of its member associations* (9). As a member of IAGG, Turkish Geriatrics Society is closely following the agenda of IAGG being aware of the "uniqueness" of Turkey, since 2004.

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