

Access to technology improves health outcomes for older adults

December 4 2013, by Carlos Malache

Louis Medvene, Wichita State professor of psychology and director of the Social Relationships Research Workgroup, is exploring the potential benefits of computer access to senior citizens' health.

A 2012 study conducted by Medvene and his team of three graduate students interviewed seniors receiving home and community-based services. The researchers asked participants about their [friendship networks](#) and showed them a demonstration of computer software designed to make computer use easier for [senior citizens](#).

The desire to use a computer among participants in the study was overwhelming, and with good reason: People who were using a computer regularly were less lonely and socially isolated than people who did not use a computer.

Although 85 percent of participants in the study indicated they wanted to use a computer, only 25 percent were regularly using one. Forty-two percent of [participants](#) were socially isolated or at risk for social isolation, a known risk factor to physical and [mental health](#).

"I think it has the potential to reduce isolation and loneliness," said Medvene. "You have poorer outcomes in terms of physical health and also mental health if you're socially isolated."

Medvene hopes that future research will explore the extent at which computer use could reduce loneliness and [social isolation](#) for at-risk

individuals.

"What Dr. Medvene is working on right now is to promote the use of new technology among older adults," said Rui Ni, assistant professor of psychology. "Social media, the computer and the Internet allow people to interact more and acquire information that they need, which they might not have access to if they do not grasp the knowledge."

The study is a part of WSU's Social Relationships Research Workgroup's broader focus on understanding and developing methods to enhance human relationships.

Provided by Wichita State University

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