

## Podcast Transcript: AARP Life@50+ with Focus on Health Innovation

**Barry:** Welcome to Senior Care Corner. I'm Barry.

**Kathy:** And I'm Kathy. Thanks for joining us!

**Barry:** You'll find us online at SeniorCareCorner.com with solutions, tools and information for families and other caregivers of senior adults.

Well Kathy, we've got a special episode of our Senior Care Corner podcast today; recorded onsite at AARP's 2012 Life@50+ in New Orleans. Hopefully we're not going to pick up too much noise in the background. While we can't take folks with us to listen to the evening music on Bourbon Street or share one of those great beignets with us at Café Du Monde, we can bring them closer to being at the event themselves. We found some great information in the expo, which we will be sharing in future podcasts, and made some contacts that will lead to some interesting interviews with companies offering resources family caregivers may find to be of value.

Rather than the news items she normally brings us to start off our episodes, Kathy is going to talk about what goes on at Life@50+.

**Kathy:** Indeed I am. So today, let's talk about news for caregivers.

The AARP convention in New Orleans this year again brought great information to all attendees, including Senior Care Corner, who are caregivers of senior family members.

If you had the opportunity to attend in the past you'll know the benefits you can receive. If you get the opportunity to attend in the future, you will be pleased that you attended. There will be two in the coming year: in the spring in Las Vegas and in the fall in Atlanta, which we'll discuss later.

The conference entitled "Life@50+" is focused on providing resources and information to those over 50 as well as to provide entertainment. There were several opportunities to meet and hear stories from not only entertainment icons but also, due to the election year, members heard from Paul Ryan and President Obama on items of interest to seniors. Stars in attendance included Billy Crystal, Hoda Kobbt, Emeril Lagasse, Jane Pauley, Martina Navratilova, Dr. Adam Gazzaley, and many others. In addition musicians were roving throughout the convention center to provide relaxation for us all.

The conference is broken down into separate areas of focus including technology, health, finances, home and leisure.

There were a multitude of corporate sponsors who had experts available to provide answers on the spot and new products to help our loved ones in all these areas.

In the health and fitness category, there were a number of free health screenings to care for the caregiver including hearing checks, lung tests, vital signs checks, and dental checks among others. We have provided a few pictures of the events to encourage you to attend in the future and we'll follow with a full pictorial view in an upcoming post.

There were great sessions of interest to caregivers and technology minded folks such as presentations by AARP bloggers Amy Goyer and Sally Abrahms entitled "Silent Scream: Caring for your Family Young and Old 24/7"; "Outsmarting the Scam Artists: How to Protect Yourself from the Most Clever Cons"; "Managing the Medicare Maze"; and "Using Social Media To Connect with Family and Friends" just to name of few of the informative University Sessions.

There were also numerous sessions to maintain our own health as caregivers so we continue to care for others. Topics included "Age-proof Your Body"; exercising with Martina Navratilova; Zumba Gold for seniors; "The Doctor in the Mirror" and "Walking: Discover How Walking with Others Increases Longevity".

In addition to the educational offerings, there were of course many ways for attendees to take a break and relax before they got back to the business of caregiving. Lifestyle experiences included movies for seniors that are not yet even out in the theaters such as Billy Crystal's new movie, cooking demonstrations, book signings, tours of the city, music and dancing, and there is always a poolside retreat.

A compelling part of the convention is of course the Expo where you can meet and greet other seniors, get loads of free stuff from companies promoting our health and learn about new products on the market now or coming soon before anyone else hears about them.

Attending an event like this one serves a twofold purpose for caregivers of seniors. The first benefit is the obvious learning taking place and the second is the ability to take a well needed respite from your caregiving duties to return refreshed and ready to take on the new day's challenge.

**Barry:** Thanks Kathy. You mentioned walking there as one of the sessions, and of course you tell us quite frequently how walking is beneficial and just a great way to stay active. Well another benefit of the Life@50+ is...you do a LOT of walking!

**Kathy:** That's true!

**Barry:** And we've done quite a bit the last few days. Matter of fact, you did so much that your shoes attacked you and we actually had to take advantage of one of the giveaways there to get some Band-Aids to patch you up a bit.

**Kathy:** That's true.

**Barry:** And while all those events that Kathy talked about are great and you can find out more about them on the AARP site; one of the most important parts of our visit was something about which you won't read as much: the AARP Health Innovation at 50+ Live Pitch.

It's something I learned about via Twitter rather than through the conference site or any other documentation. As regular listeners know we, and especially I follow closely and love to report on, and promote when we can, technology related resources that can help family caregivers improve the health, safety, and enjoyment of life for the older adults for and about whom they care.

AARP sees as part of their mission promoting the development of technology and innovation that benefits people over 50. Jody Holtzman, their Senior VP of Thought Leadership, explained that they spend a lot of time working on how to spur innovation in technology for the older population. As we report all too often, this is an area that's lagged as tech developers innovate for those they feel – maybe fairly in the past – were more receptive to their innovation but also those who are more like them. After all, many of the innovators are young, some of them very young.

Holtzman explained that AARP's efforts on technology take many paths but in this session they wanted to try a new approach, bringing innovators and potential investors together and letting the innovators pitch their ideas and respond to questions from a panel of judges, who were representative of the investment community. Sure, the company with the innovation judged to be the best would get a package of prizes, including exposure at the next Life@50+ event, but maybe the best prize for all of them was an audience with some real investors and the potential to get an infusion that helps their idea take off.

**Kathy:** AARP put what we feel is a very innovative twist on this by also having the companies pitch to a group of AARP members who were recruited from the Life@50+ attendees, with a prize also being given to the company whose idea was judged to be the best by potential consumers based on a short pitch.

Out of 80 companies that applied to pitch at the event, AARP chose the 10 best of the best. These companies were given access to coaches, including Laura Mitchell of GrandCare, who we interviewed for a feature segment previously. Each of the companies was given 5 minutes to make its pitch to the judges who then had 8 minutes to ask questions.

**Barry:** And they sure did ask questions, didn't they Kathy. Many were very direct or probing and there were certainly no softballs tossed up to the companies, just as you would expect from people considering putting their money behind a new idea. Their questions were different from what we would have asked but then their perspective a little different too.

**Kathy:** We also found some of their questions, and the mindset they might represent, disappointing and maybe part of the reason we are not seeing more technology for the older adult markets, which we will touch on more later.

**Barry:** First we're going to walk through the companies and their products one by one. You may not have heard about any of them yet – and some you may never hear about – but we want to recognize them for coming forward for this inaugural event – the first of many, we hope – and do our own part to promote innovation in technology. We'll put their web addresses in the show notes so you can check them out and learn more on your own if you'd like to.

**Kathy:** We want to say right up front that, as we discuss the companies and their pitches, it isn't our intention to critique their products or presentations but merely to introduce and highlight some of the judges' comments. We commend all of them for their innovation and participation and hope we can encourage them and other innovators in their work.

**Barry:** First of the companies up was 1DocWay, which bills itself as an online doctor's office. They started by talking about the two top healthcare concerns, the first being access and the second being cost, and about the innovation they developed to address both of those for people in underserved areas of the US. Their technology connects local clinics and nursing facilities with specialists in remote hospitals so local patients can get greater levels of care without the need to travel to a distant facility. While video calls can be accomplished from the healthcare facilities via Skype today, that technology doesn't provide the security required to assure protection of patient's privacy and medical records, leaving an opening for an innovation like 1DocWay.

**Kathy:** What I found most interesting, Barry, is that the 1DocWay system is accessed in the office of local providers, rather than at home so it is the local provider bringing the benefit of the distant specialist to the patient, which could be beneficial for both patient and provider.

**Barry:** Great point Kathy. One area covered by all the presentations, either by the company in their pitch or in questions afterward, was who would pay, that was often followed up by why that group would pay. After all, investors want to determine if an innovation is viable from a financial standpoint and the tech sector has learned that free is not a business model that holds up over time. 1DocWay feels the video consultations will be reimbursable, providing an incentive for providers to invest what is needed to make the service available to their patients.

**Kathy:** Well Barry the next up was Abilto, which administers remote behavioral health programs via phone or web-based video conference. The premise of their pitch is the ability to reduce untreated depression, which they said doubles the cost of healthcare, and thus produce better health outcomes. They provide weekly coaching with patients by a therapist via video conference or telephone over eight weeks at the convenience of the patient.

Abilto sees their market and thus financial viability with health plans that recognize the correlation between depression and health outcomes – and thus resulting in a lower cost with providing positive health outcomes if depression is treated.

We found very promising that they documented superior treatment outcomes in 8 weeks with their trained providers. Apparently the judges found this promising as well, because Abilto won the judges award at the end of the day.

**Barry:** Yes they did Kathy. CareLinx was the next company to pitch. I'll point out right now that consumer prize went to CareLinx. Both prizes right up there early. Now, they offer an online caregiver network that provides access to home care providers and thus we see as an important potential resource for many family caregivers. They see themselves filling an opening created by a very fragmented market, one that is inefficient and not the best way for families to identify the best caregivers for loved ones. After all we're talking about strangers that you're bringing into the home of your loved ones and you want to make sure you do it right.

While the level of care is most important, cost is a big concern and an area where CareLinx feels they can provide real benefits to both families and individual caregivers. In their pitch they said traditional care companies mark up the actual cost of the caregiver's time by 75% in order to recover overheads and profit. CareLinx sees an opening because they can do it for much less, allowing families to save money while putting more money in the pockets of those actually providing care and maybe attracting more capable caregivers than you can find from other companies.

**Kathy:** CareTree.me offers a way to replace paper care records in home health with an online portal centralizing information and communications to all parties, reducing cost and improving the ultimate care provided and information available to family members. They see this as a cost saver for home health agencies, as they can streamline the recording and tracking of data they need to provide for reimbursement and meet information requests. The goal was to take the paper notes of care providers online where long distance family can see it.

While CareTree.me presentation was enthusiastic, the feedback from the judges sought more information on how they would differentiate themselves in what was perceived to be a market with other options already, and thus how would they be financially viable.

**Barry:** Next up was EverMind with a very different idea, one that I at least find particularly promising. Okay, I just liked their idea. They started by pointing out that many of our senior loved ones are not active on social media and thus are not part of our "ambient awareness" so we don't know how they're doing when living independently at home and we don't have indications they are safe and in good health.

What EverMind has done is developed a discrete way of seeing if loved ones are keeping their routine via their usage of some everyday appliances or other electric devices. For example, if a

senior loved one starts each day by turning on a coffee maker, an EverMind device would tell us if the coffee maker didn't use electricity as normal today, possibly triggering us to check in with a call or a visit. This sounds like a simple "gee, I wish I'd thought of that" idea that provides what many might find to be a good tradeoff between independence and awareness of what's going on in our loved ones homes.

**Kathy:** Halfway there; the presentations were broken up here for lunch, which helped make everyone fresh for the next five.

**Barry:** Now we put in a break ourselves but we're not serving lunch, are we Kathy?

**Kathy:** I don't think so, Barry.

First up in the second group was GenieMD, which offers a cloud-based platform, with online and mobile apps that allow consumers to track and manage such things as medications, vital signs and exercise, with the capability to print reports. One particularly interesting feature was the ability to download instructions from healthcare providers directly into the app and take them home from the visit, which is better than having to remember or keep track of a piece of paper. In a side conversation, GenieMD said they plan to offer the ability for users to designate others, such as family members, to receive notification if they don't take their medications as scheduled, which sounds like an interesting feature for those who want backup if they forget.

**Barry:** Another thing they said that was interesting, Kathy, is their app is currently available in the iPhone app store. Of course I had to go out and download it and I'm going to be checking it out. If you want to check it out yourself you can just search in the app store for GenieMD. And of course we'll have a link to their website in the show notes.

The next pitch was the most unique and intriguing of the day, maybe just because it was SO different from the rest. GeriJoy is the company, and they provide talking pets for seniors who are isolated or otherwise need additional socialization, yeah I said it, talking pets. Their specific targets are those with Alzheimer's or other dementias. What it is really is an interactive pet on a tablet device, that's linked to their communications center so the voice of the pet is actually a live person conversing as the pet with the senior. It's a really interesting idea. Judges commented that the \$149 monthly fee seemed steep for families, who are seen as the primary purchasers of the service for their senior loved ones, but GeriJoy noted that the price is actually low for the 24/7 service availability with a live person at the other end.

I'll tell you this is one of those things that you really had to see to appreciate. And hopefully we will see more because this really is an innovative and interesting idea.

**Kathy:** It was. Well the next presenter, LivWell, offers a web-based service for seniors who are aging in place. They have a platform that connects seniors, or family members acting on their

behalf, to arrange for vetted local service providers for a number of potential needs and coordinates booking based on when and where the service is needed by the senior.

**Barry:** After that was MedClimate, which has a platform connecting patients with their healthcare providers via secure mobile video. Their system allows doctors to replace time during the day spent returning calls to patients, which is not something for which they receive reimbursement, with a true video visit, for which they do get paid. The idea is that the doctors benefit from the reimbursement they get, patients benefit from getting a high quality visit and time with the doctor without having to go to the office and those paying for the service, be it insurance companies or Medicare, benefit because care is more convenient for patients to seek so hopefully they will do so before their situation grows into something that's much more costly to treat.

**Kathy:** Well the final presentation was by QMedic, which offers a device that goes beyond the traditional Personal Emergency Response System, or PERS, by using behavioral alerts rather than requiring the senior to press a button when help is needed. One of their key features is a long life battery that doesn't require charging. That's important because one of the main reasons other PERS devices aren't effective is seniors forget to put them back on after they are taken off for battery charging. QMedic is entering a very crowded business but hopes to differentiate themselves successfully.

**Barry:** One thing we, well maybe just I, found surprisingly lacking in most of the pitches and Q&A sessions was a discussion of data security. With the online aspect of data transmission and communications involved with these products and services, it was disappointing not to hear more about an aspect we feel will be one of the biggest hurdles new technology must overcome to be accepted, especially by those who may not be comfortable with technology already. Yes, the pitches were short but this is such a key concept I thought the judges would have been more interested because it really is a key aspect to the success of these products.

We found all of the pitches to be promising ideas and love that the companies came forward to pitch what they have to offer. They really put themselves out there and exposed themselves to questions and really just feedback from the audience. If the judges' questions reflect some of the mindset of the investment community however, one of our biggest challenges to getting the tech innovations to improve the lives of older adults is the investors whose money helps turn ideas into products and services we can purchase. There seemed to be a perspective of seniors as a single market, with a single set of needs. We heard too many times statements such as "seniors don't want that" or "seniors won't do that" as if they are all of like mind.

As we have discussed several times before that simply is not the case. Rather than one HUGE market, older adults reflect many different large markets for products and services. Products for seniors don't have to meet the needs of all seniors to be viable, as there are so many millions of people that satisfying the needs of even a small percentage – or even the family members who

may make purchase decisions for some of the products and services – can make a product viable and make a profitable return for the company.

A prime example of this is monitoring. We heard several times that seniors don't want to be monitored in their homes as a reason a product wouldn't fly in the market. If you ask me if I want to be monitored in my home I would say no too. We are hearing more from seniors and their family members, though, that some level of monitoring is acceptable if it gives them the ability to live independently longer than they could otherwise. We think more will feel the same way when presented with the alternative of moving out of their homes and into the home of their children, for example, or into a long term care facility. This is really just following a common marketing principle of selling the benefit to be achieved by the consumer rather than the product providing that benefit.

That being said, we appreciate the time judges spent in helping make the AARP Health Innovation@50+ event possible, after all it couldn't have been done without the judges there to provide their input and provide their decision and they also provided valuable feedback to companies who made pitches and maybe helped them to improve their products or with the next idea they develop.

**Kathy:** Once again, Barry, I think we should thank and congratulate all the companies whose pitches we saw and wish them success with those and future innovations they develop for our seniors.

**Barry:** So true Kathy and to AARP, we think the event was a fantastic idea and can't wait to cover it next year as well!

Kathy, I think you have an especially quick tip to finish us up with today?

**Kathy:** Well I do have a quick tip.

As we have discussed throughout the podcast, we feel it is very beneficial for caregivers of seniors (who may themselves be seniors) attend an AARP convention for a multitude of reasons.

Our quick tip today is to start planning now to attend the conference in 2013. AARP will host two National Events: spring in Las Vegas and fall in Atlanta.

The conference is being shifted in 2013 to split into two geographic areas to help make it more accessible and so that more people will be able to participate.

The spring Life@50+ convention in Las Vegas will begin Friday, May 31 and run through June 1 and is promised to have you roaring with laughter as AARP welcomes the amazing Don Rickles and Bob Newhart to Las Vegas for the opening session. The fall event in Atlanta will begin on Friday, Oct. 4 and run through October 5 with none other than the multitalented Whoopi Goldberg for the opening session!

We will put a contact website in our show notes so that you can learn more and register.

Come and join us as we continue to learn more about resources and strategies for caring for ourselves and our seniors.

**Barry:** Thanks Kathy, I guess that wasn't quite a quick a tip as I expected but a whole lot more informative, so appreciate you doing that.

And that's it for this episode of the Senior Care Corner podcast. We thank you for joining us and hope you'll check us out online at [SeniorCareCorner.com](http://SeniorCareCorner.com) or on Facebook at Senior Care Corner.

If this is your first time listening to us, we hope you'll go back through and give a listen to some of our other episodes and check out our blog. We've got a lot of great information about resources and tips out there that family caregivers and others may find to be of value. We hope you'll stop back by often as we do produce a new podcast episode every two weeks and a few posts a week that provide additional information; so stop back by and see us.

And until we see you again, we hope you have a great day.