Curtin Heritage Living's
Marine Views aged care home

Safety and style

West Australian aged care and retirement living provider Curtin Heritage Living is partnering with technology solutions provider Alpha Global to launch new AI technology to monitor residents' safety and prevent falls while seamlessly integrating into the design of their aged care home.

BY LAUREN BROOMHAM

A new AI technology solution is delivering better health and safety outcomes for residents – and improved staff satisfaction – at the Not For Profit's newly built Marine Views home in Cottesloe, 11km from the Perth CBD.

The Digital Angel solution – re-named the Safety Monitoring System or SMS by the provider – was installed at the home in March and is designed to enhance the support offered to residents as well as make it simpler for staff to provide care.

Alpha Lifecare – the parent company of Alpha Global – specialises in aged care and healthcare equipment and partnered with a Scandinavian technology provider four years ago to adapt the solution which was predominantly used in the acute sector for the aged care sector in Australia.

How does it differ from other technologies?

Digital Angel uses artificial intelligence and optical sensors to detect human activity and alert staff before falls and other events happen for 24-7 non-intrusive in-room monitoring.

"The differentiator is that other technologies look for movement so it's generally retrospective," explained Curtin Heritage Living Managing Director, David Cox.

"Whereas this technology is about learning the behaviours of a resident and then responding. So, it is able to assess predictable behaviours of falls and other dangerous or risky situations and let staff know that that situation is about to occur."

System relies on AI, as well as optical sensors, to detect risks

Each room is customised to the resident and their specific care requirements, for example, it can detect if a resident remains in the bathroom for a prolonged period, and feed that data through to the staff via the nurse call platform.

The system does not rely solely on CCTV technology – instead, Digital Angel uses the movements picked up by the optical sensors to interpret the data and generate valuable information for staff while protecting the privacy of the resident.

Curtin Heritage Living began trialling the system at their nearby RiverSea site in Mosman Park, which offers dementia-specific care for 44 residents, last December, and has quickly replaced the previous system of floor mats and sensors.

"We often found that the floor mats increase the health and safety risk for both residents and staff," said David.

"They were also reliant on staff turning them on and off whereas this system does that itself and removes much of the risk."

And it's already seeing results – with a clear decline in falls, injuries and the number of call bells and an increase in staff and resident satisfaction.

"Staff have also realised that they have fewer residents that need assistance and fewer incident reports to complete," said David.

David Cox

"Now they are contacting us and asking, 'Do you think that this resident is suitable for this type of alarm?' or, 'We started noticing these behaviours in this resident. Is there something we can do using the technology to help that resident?' So, they are looking outside of the box now to see how far we can stretch the technology."

A $1 million investment in the future of aged care

The 'silhouette only' view from Digital Angel shows the resident clearly while maintaining privacy

There are also plans to make the technology available in its retirement village apartments as the organisation looks to provide higher-level residential-style care to its residents.

"The technology does have the same capability in retirement living," said David.

"So, if a resident does become more dependent, the technology can learn the physical environment and specific behaviours of the resident in the same way."

The technology has required a considerable investment on the organisation's part – David estimates that the bill was close to one million dollars to install the system at both sites across over 160 beds including integrating the system with their active nurse call system.

But the MD says that the SMS system has already proved its worth – and the

organisation hopes that by being an early adopter, other providers will also look at how they can innovate from both a design and technology perspective.

"We are pushing the integrated living concept in WA and people are now starting to listen," David summed up.

"It's the same with technology. We genuinely think this system is good and we want other people to start experimenting and start adopting these types of technologies because it will help with some of the issues around staffing and resident care."

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