



Annual Aging Conference Blows into the Windy City

By Amy Wilschke

Last month, Chicago hosted the 2010 Aging in America Conference presented by the National Council on Aging (NCOA) and the American Society on Aging (ASA). Professionals from the industry came out in droves to see new advancements in aging and listen to experts talk about various topics in the field of gerontology.

I was able to make it over to the Hyatt Regency several times throughout the week to represent the *Senior Sunshine Times*. A session that I found especially moving took place in the Grand Ballroom early Wednesday morning, March 17. It was called “The Aging of America: Triumph or Tragedy?” and was presented by Ken Dychtwald, President and CEO of Age Wave, Robert Butler, MD, CEO of the International Longevity Center and Tom C. Nelson, COO of AARP.

The discussion highlighted the fact that seniors are living much longer these days than in the past – some well into their 90s and 100s – and because of this, it is becoming increasingly crucial that we establish strong health care and financial systems in order to ensure that the aging population is happy and comfortable in these later years (the new legislation regarding health care had not been passed as of the conference dates). The discussion stressed the importance of seniors in society and how imperative it is that these people feel as if they still serve a purpose even though they are elderly.

On the technology front, a particularly noteworthy advancement at this year’s conference was brought in by Wellcore, a Silicon Valley-based company which has



developed an automatic fall detection and wellness monitoring system. I sat down with Wellcore representatives Pete Janssen and Dain Percifield to discuss the new product and watch a virtual demonstration of how the system works.

The monitoring device is a small, lightweight, waterproof pager that can be worn anywhere on the body discreetly. When a fall is detected, the pager sends a signal to a Wellcore specialist, who contacts the wearer to determine how serious the situation is. If immediate help is needed or there is no response from the wearer, Wellcore will alert emergency services as well as the wearer's caregivers and designated contacts and send help.

The Wellcore System is so fine-tuned that it can distinguish falls from other types of motion displayed by active seniors, such as exercise, flopping down on a chair or bed, or if the pager is accidentally dropped. Wellcore specialists work with the wearer in the first few weeks of wear to determine how active the senior is and what kind of motion can be expected on a regular basis, which trains the system to distinguish between regular movement and a potential emergency.

The system is run through the telephone line already present in the wearer's home with no need for a second line. Caregivers can monitor the wearer's activity via a password-protected online dashboard and can send messages to the

wearer that are recorded on the system's base unit in much the same way one would use an answering machine. A light on the base unit notifies the wearer of new messages, and the Wellcore System will even remind the wearer to don his or her pager if the sensor detects that the wearer has forgotten to put it on. The speaker in the base unit is powerful enough for sound to travel throughout four or five rooms of a house.

The Wellcore System was devised to help seniors live more independently at home and to be as active as they want without constant worry from loved ones. On-the-go wearers can pair their pagers with special Wellcore-compatible cell phones that use GPS to track their location within the cell phone's range. If a fall is detected, the cell phone alerts emergency response to the exact location of the wearer. This allows wearers to roam and still reap all the security benefits of the system.

Since the system tracks all motion and not just falls, this is also a great way to monitor activity and adjust according to health and fitness needs. If the wearer or caregiver notices that less activity is being tracked, it might be a good time to include more walks in the wearer's daily routine. Likewise, if certain movements which are normally recorded suddenly disappear, this could be a sign of illness or other reason to check in on the wearer.

The Wellcore System is in the testing stage right now and orders are slated to begin shipping mid-spring. For more information, visit www.Wellcore.com or call toll-free (888) 887-9989.

