



Image courtesy of Smart Caregiver

Preventing Elopement

New technology provides better anti-wandering solutions for caregivers

story by
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One of the most challenging, life-threatening issues related to the care of a person with cognitive loss is the occurrence of wandering, wherein an individual strays into unsafe territories and may be harmed. The most dangerous form of wandering is elopement, which occurs when a confused person leaves an area and does not return. The risk of wandering is a growing concern of families, long-term care facilities, regulators and insurers.

No one wants to face the emotional challenge

of caring for someone who may not recognize us or their surroundings, yet—according to the Alzheimer's Association—6 in 10 people with dementia will wander.

A person with Alzheimer's may not remember his or her name or address, and easily can become disoriented in even familiar places. Wandering among people with dementia is dangerous, but there are strategies and services to help prevent it.

Before we can look at solutions, however, it is important for families, caregivers and even HME/

DME suppliers to understand the symptoms, early warning signs and, most importantly, risk factors associated with dementia and Alzheimer's, as well as other factors or events which may increase wandering risk (brain injury or mental impediments that can adversely impact a patient's judgment).

WHO IS AT RISK?

Dementia is defined by the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Association as "the loss of intellectual functions (such as thinking, remem-

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bering, and reasoning) of sufficient severity to interfere with the person's daily functioning."

Anyone who has memory problems and is able to walk is at risk for wandering. Look for some of these warning signs: irregular times with routine tasks such as grocery shopping or returning from work; trying to "go home" when a person is at home; appearing lost or disoriented; and difficulty locating familiar places such as the backyard, bedroom, bathroom, etc.

AFFORDABLE AND EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS

Several companies on the market offer mobility monitoring solutions that can help prevent elopement. Patented, easy-to-use products such as these have helped tens of thousands of caregivers reduce the wander and elopement risks of their patients. Price points on such equipment can range greatly, even upward of \$10,000 and which may require an expensive maintenance contract or service agreement for use, service and installation.

Some of the solutions are plug-and-play, purchased through an approved HME provider, and shipped ready to use. This type of product can help keep costs down for a nursing home facility, and might also make it easier for the HME supplier to serve their customers by not having to be concerned with time consuming, and often expensive, service and maintenance of other anti-wandering suppliers.

A strong product contender to consider for elderly monitoring is a cordless option. Not to be confused with wireless technology, cordless simply means no cords, therefore eliminating the risk of tripping or entanglement from loose cords near the floor or bedside.

The market offers several options for pressure-sensing devices such as exit mat, floor mats, impact landing mats, pressure pads for beds and pressure pads for chairs. Some feature

built-in patented transmitters that send a wireless signal to an anti-wandering or fall prevention monitor that is usually located outside of a nursing home resident's room to minimize noise disturbance.

Quite often, people who suffer from dementia can become agitated by loud sounds. Selecting a product with technology that offers quieter monitoring via adjustable volume controls that minimize disruption means the user is more likely to adjust to a more regular daily routine.

By using adjustable volume and by placing the monitor away from the patient at its quietest setting, you can maintain safety without causing unnecessary commotion. Another option to consider is a unit that features a blinking light, offering a visual alarm to on-duty caregivers.

With dementia patients, it is critical in that only the caregiver can reset the monitor when a patient attempts to exit. People with dementia may not be able to remember their names, but they can still figure out how to reset or disable monitoring devices.

By keeping track of how often a patient's alarm needs to be reset (based on patient mobility), a facility or caregiver can more efficiently allocate limited time resources to attend to those patients who are more likely to wander. By keeping track of how frequently a patient is mobile, caregivers can help reduce the risk of elopement. Products that are designed to provide this valuable information to caregivers can further aid in establishing a more cohesive risk assessment for each patient.

FLOOR MAT MONITORS

Monitored exit mats are an easy-to-use wandering system that includes wireless motion sensors that send signals to a unit. To employ, a caregiver simply plugs in the weight-sensing floor mat to the monitor, which can be placed at the patient's bedside or in the doorway of a nursing facility

room that needs to be monitored.

As soon as a patient steps on the weight-sensing mat, it alerts the caregiver via a wireless pager. This is an inexpensive solution that is perfect for private residences or any memory care or dementia facility. Some of these floor mats are available to purchase pre-programmed to a pager as needed. Multiple rooms and/or patients can be quietly monitored with one or multiple pagers. This system can also work with central monitors, pagers, cell phones, hall way emergency call lights, etc.

EXIT ALARM SYSTEMS

Another monitoring approach can be achieved through wireless anti-wandering exit alarm systems. Simply place the door bar near any doorway that needs to be monitored.

When a patient attempts to exit, the caregiver is notified by a quiet but audible alarm and/or a blinking light installed in the hallway. Dementia patients often have a fear of floor mats, as they appear to be a hole in the floor that could cause them to trip or fall. Choosing a mat design in the same color as the floor can help alleviate that fear.

DOOR BAR SYSTEMS

Monitoring with a door bar system requires the patient to wear a transmitter, sometimes similar to a watch. This transmitter triggers the door bar when the patient is near the door. As a patient approaches a door, a visual and audible alert will sound to alert caregivers that a patient may be attempting to exit.

Door bar systems can also include extra accessories such as door locks for high-risk situations, contact switches to alert as the door is opened and wireless key pads so only a caregiver with a code can reset the alarm, thus alleviating potential patient tampering.

This system can also work with central monitors, pagers, cell phones, hallway emergency call lights and the like. Some door bar systems are available pre-programmed so only a pager as needed. Multiple rooms/patients can be quietly monitored with one or more pagers.

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Common Signs And Symptoms Of Dementia

- Memory loss
- Impaired judgment
- Difficulties with abstract thinking
- Faulty reasoning
- Inappropriate behavior
- Loss of communication skills
- Disorientation to time and place
- Gait, motor and balance problems
- Neglect of personal care and safety
- Hallucinations, paranoia, agitation

All HCPCS codes subject to change.



PILL POUCH

The Pill Pouch is a low-tech way to build knowledge and confidence in adhering to medication at home, and also provides medical professionals with a way to educate patients about their medication. The Pill Pouch allows care professionals and family members to stay informed about a patient's medications.

Visit pillpouch.net.

Circle 220 on card or visit scproductsinfo.com.



SABI DAYBOX PILL ORGANIZER

The large Sabi weekly DAYBOX organizer for medication management includes eight detachable pill boxes, each one imprinted with the day of the week, plus an extra pill box. Each pill box has three spacious compartments suitable for storing plenty of large-size pills, vitamins and supplements. The eight individual daily pill boxes clip together to form a stylish weekly pill box, or detach one or more to store as a daily pill box in a purse or bag. Each daily pill box is covered with a soft peel-back scatter-proof rubber lid that is gentle on the hands when opening and closing, and includes contoured compartments for easy access to pills. Visit sabi.com.

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LOGICMARK FREEDOMALERT

LogicMark's FreedomAlert is a programmable, two-way voice pendant communicator with no monthly fees. The two-way voice technology provides extended coverage, as the user communicates directly through the pendant. The FreedomAlert can be programmed to call family, friends or emergency 911 at the push of a button. Up to four contacts can be programmed into the unit. It can be customized to call only the contacts, call the contacts then 911 or simply call 911 immediately. The pendant is water resistant and has a range that covers the entire home and into the yard.

Visit logicmark.com.

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APOTHECARY PRODUCTS REGISTER PILL REMINDER

The travel-size Register Pill Reminder keeps your medications with you and keeps track of your doses and schedule. The large compartments hold multiple pills and the tight seal keeps out moisture. The register is retractable, making it easy to protect and use only when necessary. Visit apothecaryproducts.com.

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CAPTEL CAPTIONED TELEPHONE

The CapTel Captioned Telephone works like any other telephone with one important addition—it displays every word the caller says during the conversation. CapTel phone users can listen to the caller while also reading captions in the CapTel's bright display window. While you dial a number normally, the CapTel phone connects to the captioning service with the push of a button. Calls are clear, just like calls on a traditional phone, but the captioning service transcribes the conversation into captions, which appear on the CapTel display window. Users hear what they can, and read what they need to. Visit captel.com.

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DRIVE MEDICAL PULL CORD ALARM

Drive Medical's Pull Cord Alarm provides an economical way to notify caregivers that a patient has moved. The alarm easily secures to a bed or chair with a self-contained clip, and the activation cord is adjustable from 18 to 36 inches. When the user gets up, the pin connector pulls from the alarm unit and activates the signal. The alarm deactivates with an on/off switch and has two volume settings.

Requires one 9V battery (included). Visit drivemedical.com.

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CLARITY FORTISSIMO HANDS-FREE SPEAKERPHONE

Fortissimo is a hands-free speakerphone that can be easily operated via the large adjustable color touchscreen or by many optional devices such as a wireless pendant, Bluetooth headset or a variety of switches (air switch, pillow switch, etc.). The Fortissimo features a huge speaker capable of 85 decibels, a backlit talking keypad with talking caller ID, adjustable tone control and an extra-loud flashing ringer. Users can access ClarityLogic, Clarity's personalized support system that can quickly and easily help customize the settings of the phone at the touch of a button.

Visit clarityproducts.com.

Circle 226 on card or visit scproductsinfo.com.





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DAKOTA ALERT WIRELESS FLOOR MAT

The Dakota Alert Wireless Floor Mat wireless floor mat can be placed under a throw rug or welcome mat and will send a signal back to the DC-1000 receiver any time someone steps on the mat. The mat can be used in an elder care situation to monitor when a patient gets out of bed. When the patient steps on the mat a signal will be sent to the caregiver. Wireless range of up to 1,000 feet between mat and receiver. The receiver will sound a chime and flash a light to notify. The mat operates on 2 CR2032 batteries (included). Size: 22" x 15". **Visit dakotaalert.com.**

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**APOTHECARY PRODUCTS
PUSH-BUTTON MEDTIME
REMINDER**

The Push-Button Pill Reminders are the only pill reminders endorsed by the Arthritis Foundation. Together with the Medtime Planner—a weekly 4-times-a-day pill reminder with large see-through, contoured compartments and a no-slip bottom—medication doses are not only well organized but also easy to access for easy health care management. **Visit apothecaryproducts.com.**

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DRIVE MEDICAL ALARM DOOR BANNER
Drive's Alarm Door Banner provides high visibility combined with a magnetically activated alarm to create an effective deterrent to wandering. It comes with an arresting yellow banner and brilliant red STOP sign. The alarm features an off/soft/loud switch and LED low-battery indicator, and attaches to any doorjamb with hook-and-loop (fits doors 30 to 42 inches wide). Requires two AAA batteries, sold separately. **Visit drivemedical.com.**

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**SMART CAREGIVER
FALLGUARD QUIET
CORDLESS® MONITOR**

Patented CordLess anti-wandering monitor and a 24" x 48" grey floor mat with beveled edges. Because there are no cords, this patented technology eliminates any tripping hazards associated with other floor mats. Monitor can be mounted away from the bed, removing in room alarm noise. The Wireless CordLess sensor pads gets placed under the resident. When the resident gets up and the pressure is removed from the pad, a wireless signal is sent to the alarm alerting the caregiver. Works with multiple products, bed and chair sensor pads, pressure sensors and floor mats. **Visit smartcaregiver.com.**

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SABI SHAKE PILL DISPENSER

The Sabi SHAKE shake-and-take pill dispenser is a safe way to easily dispense medications and prevent contamination. An ideal dispenser for people with arthritis, the lid is easy to open and close securely. Simply shake your pill or pills into the top and slide dosage into your hand. The rest of your medication stays safely inside the dispenser, free from handling. A rotary expiration date dial completes the dispenser so that you'll never have to worry about pills going bad.

Visit sabi.com.

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COMPLETE MEDICAL PILL REMINDER
Four pill compartments along with four alarms a day that remind the patient of medication times. Three alarm modes include vibrate, beep or vibrate/beep. Time shows in 12- or 24-hour format. Backlit LCD. **Visit completemedical.com.**

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CLARITY ENSEMBLE TELEPHONE

Ensemble is an amplified telephone that displays a transcript of your phone conversation in real-time on a large 7-inch color touchscreen. The Ensemble works by harnessing the free call captioning service provided by ClearCaptions, a Federal Communications Commission (FCC)-certified service provider via the high-speed Internet in your home. An amplified handset provides up to 50 decibels of loud-and-clear sound using the same state-of-the-art digital technology found in hearing aids. Users can access ClarityLogic, our personalized support system that can quickly customize the settings of the phone at the touch of a button.

Visit clarityproducts.com.

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SMART CAREGIVER DEPART ALERT™ DOOR BAR SYSTEM

The easy-to-install DepartAlert™ System includes door strip monitor alarm, resident wristband, magnetic contact switch, AC power adapter and magnetic Caregiver reset key (tamper-proof). This system is plug-and-play, and does not require a maintenance contract to install or service. Capable of monitoring several patients at once. Simply place the door bar near any doorway that needs to be monitored. The resident wears a wristband transmitter, similar to a watch, which triggers the door bar when the resident is near the door. This system can also work with central monitors, pagers, cell phones, hallway emergency call lights, etc. **Visit smartcaregiver.com.**

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