

2C: Design Research Check-In

We are researching the daily routines of senior citizens with memory loss. So far, we have conducted interviews with three participants (names changed):

Lee: Semi-structured interview, 50 minutes. 21 years old. 2 years of caregiving experience at local assisted living home.

Dao W.: Structured interview. 65 years old. Took care of his 83-year-old mother who had experienced memory loss for 3 years at home.

Chen: Semi-structured interview. 57 years old. Took care of his father who had experienced short-term memory loss for 2+ years.

We learned many useful things about our problem space from our interviews:

- Common issues include confusion when going from place to place and remembering to do tasks such as go to the bathroom or brush teeth
- Little modern tech use, but many use old-fashioned TV or landline phone
- Memory loss experience is scary and frustrating for those experiencing it
- Memory loss comes like a “reset”
 - Usually in the mornings when they wake up
 - Can lead to unnecessary repetition of tasks
- Familiarity is the best way to help, and family is #1 source of familiarity
- In assisted living, residents rarely initiate activities but usually go along with activities proposed to them
- Individual could experience a different level of memory loss during a period of time: from forgetting basic information (names, dates) to behaviors (such as forgetting to turn off the gas range) which might lead to the loss of ability to live independently
- There are also different kinds of memory loss, from gradual long-term memory loss to short-term memory loss.

A few opportunities for exploration were uncovered:

- Seniors in assisted living would benefit from interactive hub where they can go when they are confused
- Seniors living independently would also potentially benefit from constant reminders of a task they have yet to complete, until they complete the task
- For seniors with short-term memory loss, pictures of events that have recently occurred may improve retention of memories
- If there is an incident, there is not always someone around who saw what happened so something that lets caretakers know what happened would give them peace of mind (e.g. a video of the senior taking their medicine)

Since we interviewed people with whom we were previously familiar, establishing rapport was not as much of an issue for this part of our research. For our future research, we plan to continue to uncover pain points for seniors with memory loss and their caretakers by conducting a contextual inquiry from Lee’s workplace. Also, we will conduct secondary research, initially focusing on finding out which level of memory loss happens most commonly in the population. We are in the process of obtaining permission to come in and observe interactions between caretakers and seniors. Based on James’ advice, we will be watching out for opportunities to integrate sensors or other physical objects into the personal homes and assisted living homes of seniors. If we are unable to obtain access to the assisted living home, we will conduct one more interview with a family who has senior with memory loss issue.