

Supporting entrepreneurship in the over 50's

SILVER STARTERS



Han van Doorn
Entrepreneur, AreYouOkayToday

Innovation for an ageing population

It is forecast the number of people aged 65 and over will surge to 150 million by 2050.^[1] As we age, we are more likely to face ill health. In addition to the impact this has on the quality of life of older people, it creates strain on Europe's health and social systems.

To cope with greater demands on healthcare services, innovation is needed to enable older people to remain healthy, active and live independently.

Older people have traditionally been under-represented in this process, but true innovation only hits the mark when its end users are in the driving seat.

"We have to start thinking about as an active group, which has to be supported by programmes to involve them in innovation, and to treat them as partners." –
Prof Lucyna Woźniak

A valuable contribution

EIT Health's Silver Starters entrepreneurship programme is an eight-week course that upskills older people who want to start a new business. It provides a solid foundation into the essentials of establishing a new company and helps to scrutinise and validate the idea to increase its chances of success.

Founder of AreYouOkayToday, Han van Doorn, discovered Silver Starters when, after developing his technology, he didn't know what steps to take next. The course helped him to write a business model, establish a mission statement and hone the business' goals, taking his solution to the next level.

"I had no idea what to do. Then as a gift from heaven, I read about this project"
– **Han van Doorn**

Meeting unmet need

Every year, more than 30% of people over 65 experience a fall.^[2] They contribute to disability and care home admissions, and can even be fatal.^[3] By enabling more people to live independently and safely at home, for longer, AreYouOkayToday can help to reduce pressure on healthcare services.

AreYouOkayToday has already tested well in many homes across the Netherlands, with positive responses from users and their caregivers, and it's gaining interest from all over the world.

Han is now in discussions with energy suppliers about providing it as an added value service alongside their electricity supply. In future, it could become a mainstream solution in elderly care.

"I could not have started this project 30 years ago, because I wouldn't have understood the problem as I do now."
– **Han van Doorn**

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The AreYouOkayToday story

True innovation only hits the mark when its end users are in the driving seat. Yet, people over the age of 50 are often under-estimated and under-represented in the field of innovation, which is leading to a lack of digital health solutions that truly meet their needs and address the challenges associated with our ageing population.

EIT Health's 'Silver Starters' educational programme is striving to change this. The programme is specifically designed to encourage entrepreneurship in people over the age of 50, providing them with the knowledge they need to develop their own businesses and solutions that support healthy and active ageing, as no one knows this demographic's challenges like those closest to them.

Entrepreneur, Han van Doorn, is a graduate of the programme, which enabled him to accelerate the development of his home safety solution, 'AreYouOkayToday'. The system enables caregivers to remotely monitor the movements of their elderly loved ones in their own home, helping them to live independently for longer and easing the care burden.

AreYouOkayToday works by connecting to the electrical meter, recording the pattern of electricity usage of every electrical device in the home through a self-learning system developed by Han himself. If it detects a change in electrical activity, for example a drop in usage which might indicate the person has had a fall or is in need of help, it sends out an alert via the app, first to the elderly person to check if there has been an incident at home, and then to their caregiver.

The inspiration for Han's invention came from his own experience of living alone, and relying on his son as his caregiver. For Han, who himself is over 80-years-old, it's an improved solution to the current wearables, such as panic buttons, and cameras on the market because it's low maintenance, non-intrusive, preserves his privacy and it reassures his son that all is well.

The response to the technology during user testing has been positive and it is gaining interest from across the globe.



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[1] Ageing Europe - statistics on population developments. European Commission. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Ageing_Europe_-_statistics_on_population_developments#Older_people_-_E2.80.94_population_overview. Accessed July 2020.

[2] Tinetti ME, Speechley M, Ginter SF. Risk factors for falls among elderly persons living in the community. N Engl J Med. 1988;319(26):1701–1707.

[3] Dionyssiotis Y. Analyzing the problem of falls among older people, 2012.