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Doing Smart Things with Smart Phones

When Bruce Bigenho's mom, Susan, was diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease, Bruce started worrying about her safety at home.

Susan is a fiercely independent woman who loves her home in Santa Barbara and has always been the strong cornerstone for her entire family. At a very young age, she and her two siblings were separated from their parents in North Korea and sent to Seoul, in an attempt to evade a bloody civil war. In Seoul she raised her brother and sister, helped them through school (putting her brother through college all the way through his doctorate), and became a successful business woman herself. She immigrated to America in the mid 70s with her own new family.

Now, at the age of 83, Susan is frail and has fallen a few times at home.

Bruce wanted to honor his mom's amazing life-story and protect her dignity, making sure she continues living as independently as possible after the diagnosis. For that to happen, Bruce knew she would need assistance in her own home.



Caregiver Bruce Bigenho showing how the monitoring system works from his iPhone and iPad.

Although Bruce had hired an in-home care professional, he felt he needed an extra pair of eyes watching over his mom. Being an only child, he had no one else with whom to share caregiving responsibilities. That's when he turned to technology for an answer.

Electronic monitoring systems have been around for many years and have become an important safety tool not only for businesses but for home owners as well. The internet has recently created a boom in available technologies. There are now numerous monitoring systems available in the market, with prices ranging from several

thousand dollars to under \$100. Some systems require complex installation and ongoing subscription plans. Others are simple stand-alone devices that can operate out of an existing wireless connection and transmit images without the extra expenses of subscription plans.

After careful market research, Bruce opted to install an internet-connected camera named "Mole" in Susan's living-room. After what he described as a "very easy" installation process, the Mole transmits continuous images through a secure Internet channel that Bruce can access from anywhere

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alzheimer's  association®**Caregiver Tips****Technologies for Caregiving Families:**

 Skype offers free online **video calling** to anywhere in the world. With a subscription plan (starting at \$4.49 a month), you can also make video conferencing where you can bring several members of the family into the conversation.

 GPS systems can help keeping track of your loved one on-the-go. There are numerous **“tracking watches”** on the market, that can be worn just like a regular watch.

 Autoyet.com offers a GSM/GPRS/GPS Tracking Watch for \$118.37.

 GPS tracking devices can also easily be **placed in a vehicle** to monitor its location.

 Google has a free app called Latitude that allows people you select to **see your current location on a map**. It can be helpful if your loved one carries a cell phone. This app can also help locate a lost or stolen phone, even if the app is not turned on.

 There are a variety of automatic **medicine dispensing boxes** that can help make sure the correct medication is taken. Some boxes can even alert you if a dose was missed.

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through a computer or mobile device.

The Mole has become Bruce's second pair of eyes. It has allowed him to check in with Susan at anytime of the day and from anywhere in the world. It even has a voice component that allows him to talk to her as he remotely watches over her.

“This device gives me peace of mind,” says Bruce while he proudly shows live images of his mom's living-room on his iPhone. “For my mom it gives reassurance that I'm always with her, watching over her.”

The camera also has some other nice features like motion detection and night vision, allowing viewing even in complete darkness. The user can also remotely control the pan and tilt it from any web browser or iPhone. The user can also give “guest passes” to other family members who can take turns in monitoring duties.

Susan also uses technology to connect with her relatives in Korea. Bruce set her up with video Skype, which can be used with a simple notebook (like a \$200 Acer netbook, for example). “You should see her whole face light-up when she talks to her nephew in Korea!” says Bruce.

Today, more and more families are looking into technology for additional tools to facilitate caregiving. While electronic monitoring and communications will never replace one-on-one contact, such technologies can be used to allow families to remain in touch when physical presence is not possible. And caregivers need every tool they can get to make sure their loved ones are safe and comfortable.

Before investing in a particular system, make sure you have done thorough research and have talked to other families who have used the same system. Alzheimer's Association consultants receive numerous requests daily for information regarding monitoring and tracking systems. The options are numerous, and new systems are constantly becoming available. Please contact your local Care Consultant for more information about safety systems, including Safe Return and Comfort Zone. *Written by Luciana Cramer, Care Consultant with the Alzheimer's Association, Santa Barbara County Regional Office.*



The “Mole”



Some monitoring devices commercially available:

- **Wi-Fi Nanny Camera**, available at Knowyournanny.com for \$199
- **Foscam FI8908W**, available at Amazon.com starting at \$74.99
- **Zmodo CM-I12316GY**, available at Provantage.com at \$91.90
- **Astak MOLE H.264**, available at Walmart.com at \$239.54

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