

Study pushes the button on intuitive design

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(PhysOrg.com) -- A Queensland University of Technology researcher is looking for volunteers to take part in a study aimed at making contemporary appliances such as dvd players and mobile phones more usable for the elderly.

Simon Lawry, from QUT's Faculty of Built Environment and Engineering in Australia, said if products were designed based on "intuitive interaction", or using knowledge gained through other experiences, it could give older adults increased independence.

Mr Lawry's study involves observing people aged 18 and over using everyday appliances in their homes.

He said if a person was already familiar with using certain technology, by adapting that technology to other products, it provided familiarity and freed up cognitive resources.

"Previous research has shown that one of the reasons older adults struggle with new technology and using contemporary products is that as they age their [cognitive abilities](#) often decline," he said.

"A good example is an ATM. When an older person is at an ATM and they are struggling to use it, it is because they are using all of their cognitive resources.

"If we can determine what older people are already familiar with - then based on the idea of intuitive use - they should be able to go up to a

product and use it without necessarily having to learn to use it."

Mr Lawry said the overall aim of the study was to help older people become more independent.

He said his study would focus on four age groups - 18 to 44, 45 to 59, 60 to 74 and 75 plus - and measure people's familiarity with different products.

"Basically we are looking to determine the knowledge of older people and how we can use this knowledge to develop tools so better products can be designed for them," he said.

Mr Lawry's interest in how aging affects a person's interaction with different products was sparked when he went fishing with his dad.

"I noticed that my dad was using a GPS and he couldn't see it at all," he said.

"So that prompted my previous research into how the eye ages and how it affects the design of products. Now I am looking at intuitive design and how it might be able to help [older people](#) retain their independence."

Participation in the study requires capturing data in both audio and video formats and includes a short interview. Participants need to be living independently.

To volunteer email [s.lawry\(at\)qut.edu.au](mailto:s.lawry@qut.edu.au) or phone 3138 9183 (in Australia).

Provided by Queensland University of Technology ([news](#) : [web](#))

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