



George Netscher

Founder and CEO
SafelyYou

In this Voices interview, Senior Housing News sits down with SafelyYou CEO and founder George Netscher to learn why his company's memory care fall prevention system has an 87% opt-in rate from seniors and family, why a liability insurance provider partnered with the company to reimburse for the technology and how a human team of fall analysts are changing fall prevention efforts for memory care residents in senior living.

Editor's note: This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

SafelyYou is a spinoff from the top-ranked Berkeley Artificial Intelligence Research Laboratory, with technology that reduces falls in memory care by 40%. To learn more about why SafelyYou might be right for your community, visit safely-you.com.

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Q: Senior Housing News: You founded SafelyYou three years ago. You've spent your career in emerging technologies. What are the most important experiences that you draw on in your role as CEO?

George Netscher: My family was affected by Alzheimer's disease, and I wanted to find a way to make it better for my family and for many others. Every woman on my mom's side is affected by Alzheimer's disease, so I spent a lot of time since I was a little boy thinking about the things that I can do to try to make life better for them. I went to Berkeley because I found a faculty that is part of a top-ranked Artificial Intelligence Research Lab, but also because I found faculty who were similarly affected by Alzheimer's.

SafelyYou as a company, therefore, is a combination of a mission-driven focus on helping people with Alzheimer's disease and dementia, and creating operational excellence through technology.

Q: That's a great introduction to SafelyYou. What does the company do and what is its major differentiator compared to similar solutions?

George Netscher: I don't know that there are similar solutions, frankly. What differentiates us, one, is that we are the first fall prevention company ever that's paid for by a liability insurance provider. And two, we have consistency: We're showing an average of 40% fewer falls and 70% fewer emergency room (ER) visits from falls. With one community, we even reached a 93% reduction in ER visits for dementia-related resident falls. We consistently get our data published and peer-reviewed. I think we're the only fall prevention company in the industry that can say that we showed 80% fewer ER visits with P 0.003 and actually attach a P-value to it.



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But I think our biggest differentiator is that we're not just a technology company. We describe it as being a technology-enabled care program. Part of it is the technology, but the technology enables the care. We have fall experts who work with every one of our communities, reviewing a thousand falls

every single month. They've developed this deep expertise about not only how falls happen, but what we can do to prevent them. That human component is pretty different.

Q: SafelyYou works to prevent falls in part through artificial intelligence. How does it work?

George Netscher: At a high level, our focus is on supporting folks with dementia. The big challenge here is that more than 90% of falls go unwitnessed, and if you have someone who can't reliably tell you what happened, you're stuck. You often will send them to the emergency room because they could have hit their head and you don't have any way of keeping it from happening again. These are folks with cognitive impairment who can't necessarily learn from how they fell the last time. If we can understand how these falls are happening, there are so many things we can do to make life better for folks.

It's an opt-out program. We put a camera in units for people who opt-in for the system, and we use artificial intelligence to detect if somebody is on the ground, directly from video. We're not using sensors. We're just analyzing the video stream. We've now shown we can do this with 10,000 times higher accuracy than wearable devices or bed alarms. We generate on the order of one false alarm per year, which is mind-blowing to me.

Because we keep video when we've detected somebody's been on the ground, along with some period beforehand, usually 30 minutes, we can see how this person went to the ground. Did they hit their head? Do we need to send them to the emergency room? That's where our fall experts come in, where we can identify patterns based on all the falls we're working on to say, "This person is getting up to unplug this nightlight." We put that nightlight in place because we wanted consistent lighting for them. Actually, in this case, it's keeping them up at night, and that's creating a fall risk." Now we can do exactly the right thing for this individual.

Q: Any time you're placing cameras in someone's residence, especially in senior living, there are going to be concerns from those residents and from family members about security and privacy. What does SafelyYou do to address those concerns?

George Netscher: Great question, and even before these concerns, liability is a big concern for a lot of folks. That's why we're proud to be the first fall prevention company that is partially paid for by a liability insurance provider.

The big questions we get are usually about liability and privacy, and there are pretty easy answers to both of them. From a privacy perspective, it's offered as an opt-in program. I think in the last quarter, we were at 87% opt-in. That's more than double the opt-in for employee 401(k) plans for comparison.

From a liability perspective, the fact that we're the first company ever that's paid for by an insurer should tell you that the insurers have looked at this pretty deeply and from their data, what they're seeing is pretty big impact. Falls are 50% of claims in senior living communities, and we have 40% fewer falls on average. If you combine those two numbers, you're going to expect 20% fewer claims, which is really meaningful.

Q: The flip side of all this is that technology can be a selling point for operators. How does your technology help them sell their services and drive move-ins?

George Netscher: If you have 87% opt-in for a program, you're obviously doing something that families like. The way we start working with an operator is we'll do a two-month trial period. With one exception, we've had a family move in every single time during that period. Operates will go talk to families and they'll come back and say, "Our family said they're going to move out if we take this out." That's the level of impact it's having for them.

That is just really powerful and all the more so in times of COVID, when families do not want to be going to the emergency room. If you're in a SafelyYou community, you're going to get a phone call that says, "Mom was on the ground. She was on the ground for three minutes. We know exactly what happened and this is what we're doing to keep it from happening again." That's a very different phone call from, "We found Mom on the ground. We don't know how long she was there, we don't know what happened, so we're sending her to the emergency room." That just leaves everybody with this feeling of helplessness and distress and all of that.

From the retention side, we've seen really powerful results. If you can keep folks healthier, you can maintain that trust with families, you can keep dollars in their pocket. We're saving families \$300 a month on average in medical expenditures. We have testimonials from families saying, "If we're not spending that money on medical expenses, we would much rather be spending that on her care." We keep folks living in senior housing longer.

Q: Fall prevention always matters in senior living, but with more people at risk of muscle atrophy due to COVID-driven quarantines, have you seen an increase in fall prevention requests from operators?

George Netscher: We definitely have, for a number of reasons. Our own data shows about a 20% increase in falls overall in senior living, as folks are in shelter-in-place. They might not be exercising as much or getting as much social exposure, making falls one of the unintended consequences of the protections we've put in place for COVID.

Yet one of our communities at Merrill Gardens went three weeks without a fall during the peak of COVID around April. Statistically, I looked at their data, they would have had 12 falls during that time. That is a huge relief to families, and to be able to put that in your marketing material — it's the reason we exist, because there's never been a time with so much opportunity to do good.



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Q: You mentioned that SafelyYou recently launched this unique partnership with Church Mutual Insurance, and another partnership with Direct Supply. Tell us about these partnerships.

George Netscher: We're thrilled to be working with both of these groups. They're both clearly thought leaders in the industry, and are finding ways to support folks at a challenging time. If falls are something that you're thinking about, and you're thinking about ways to drive occupancy as we emerge from COVID, this is something we can do to both increase occupancy and reduce costs.

On Direct Supply, everybody knows in the industry that they are thought leaders in a bunch of ways, particularly at the policy level. We looked at a number of potential partners on the channel partnership side and formed a partnership with Direct Supply based on the shared mission and vision and culture of the two companies.

Q: Lastly, what's new for SafelyYou or what's coming for SafelyYou in 2021?

George Netscher: Just like the Church Mutual partnership, we're doing some really interesting things behind the scenes to drive occupancy. First and foremost, we're working to make sure that every single time there's a lead from someone whose challenge is, "I have a loved one with dementia and they're falling and we don't know what to do about it," or, "They just had a big fall and they are coming out of the hospital," we want our communities winning every single one of those leads. We have some pretty cool data backing that up and some pretty cool partnerships that should be announced in the not too distant future.



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We're also sharing all of our learnings and resources, so look out for a fall resource hub coming this month. There's a tendency from operators to think that we have to spend money to solve a problem, but from all of our work, there's tremendous opportunity to introduce some fairly simple practices that can go a long way with very little spend.