Elderly and technologies: between myths and reality

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Background: Currently, the picture of an old person using technology is still very negative. Indeed, it is often said that old people are not interested in technologies, can't understand their utility or have not the physical capacity to use them. These stereotypes can negatively influence the adoption of technologies with aging. Indeed, despite the increasing availability of new technologies for the benefit of old people, their use is currently extremely low.

Material and methods: We therefore wanted to explore, through an online survey widely distributed in Wallonia (Belgium)(11,579 respondents), the perception and use of new technologies by the olders.

Results: With regard to the use of technologies, analyses indicate that older people use the smartphone and the tablet less than younger. However, results show that this lower use does not appear to be related to an inability, but rather to the fact that people do not perceive it as useful ($p < 0.00$). Furthermore, we note that the difficulties in using these technologies are relatively similar in the different age groups (41-50, 51-60, 61-70, 71-80, 81-90 years old). The difficulties that can increase with age are generally related to the ergonomics of the device and not to a problem of sight (readability of the screen) or fine motor skills (writing with the touch keyboard).

Conclusion: These data therefore seem to confirm that older people have the physical abilities to use new technologies and that they can be interested in them if they are useful and adapted to their needs.