

Appendix A

Focus Group – November 2005

Notes from Focus Group Meeting

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Focus Group Questionnaire

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**NIH-NIA Focus Group
O'Malley Senior Center, Odenton, Maryland
7:00 PM on Wednesday, November 9, 2005**

Participants (clockwise around table):

1. Fred Hanna(from Olney)
2. Michael Alloy(from Columbia)
3. Staton Kaufman (from Pasadena, moving to Parkville)
4. Don Hancock (from Severna Park)
5. Dick Smith (from Annapolis, moving to Eastern Shore)
6. Francis Ennels (from Temple Hills area)
7. John Terebey (from Denton)
8. Carol Bell (from Church Hill, Chestertown area)
9. Kay Crouch (from Salisbury).

Not present, but contributing later via email: Kelley Perry (from Salisbury); Ann Benbow (from La Plata).

Present, but not participating in discussion: Stephanie Dailey.

Meeting began with introductions and overview of program, goals, and request for suggestions to more effectively “train the trainers”.

Request for clarification of “senior” for purpose of study	<i>Dick</i>
60+ with effort at <u>range</u> of ages, as well as range of ethnic and gender diversity	<i>Doug</i>
What is expected level of experience among students?	<i>Dick</i>
Again, a range. Ideally some experience (e.g., have used a mouse, maybe have been on internet) Shoot for total of 36 older adults	<i>Doug</i>
Request for clarification on length of lessons	<i>Don</i>
Each lesson should be about 90 minutes.	<i>Doug</i>
Is there a target time allotment for class?	<i>Staton</i>
Maybe 7 weeks @ once a week, or 3 weeks @ twice a week	<i>Doug</i>
<i>There was some confusion for me about what was a class, vs a lesson. My sense is a “class” would ultimately consist of the complete series of 12 lessons, with each lesson comprising one 90-minute session. (For the purposes of this study, however, each participating student would take a “class” consisting of 2 lessons.)</i>	

My experience is that attention fades after 90 minutes, and 8-10 weeks is the limit for a class.	<i>Staton</i>
<i>There was some discussion, with most participants concurring.</i>	
Morning classes work best, because they mesh better with the public transportation that seniors are using.	<i>Carol</i>
That also gets them home for <i>Days of Our Lives</i> in the afternoon.	<i>Kay</i>
<i>General laughter & agreement.</i>	
In addition, seniors are often working around health issues, doctor's appointments, etc.; 75-80% attendance is about the best to hope for.	<i>Dick</i>
And the impact of the holidays will result in an additional dip in attendance.	<i>Fred</i>
<i>There was a question about evening classes.</i>	
A lot will depend on the facilities, as well as schedules of other members of the team.	<i>Doug</i>
Looking at lessons 1 & 7, the approach may be too basic. Seniors I am getting are: 1. Educated 2. Motivated (e.g., by grandchildren, presence of a computer in the house.)	<i>Carol</i>
Most of my students have the basics, but beyond that there is considerable variation.	<i>Fred</i>
The lesson is somewhat simplistic, but that is a plus because it walks through the basics very well – and if the group already has the basics, it's easy to skim over and bring the lesson to their level (as opposed to inserting the basics if they aren't included and there are students who need them).	<i>Don</i>
There seem to be 2 paths being used, both useful: 1. How to navigate the Internet 2. Content of MedLinePlus Useful to include <u>upfront</u> involvement in <u>health</u> topics. For example, begin by using index card to write down (anonymously) health issues they might be interested in. This would 1. make the class instantly more relevant by starting with something they have an interest in 2. allow more experienced users to get involved in health issues while bringing new computer users up to speed.	<i>Michael</i>
The screen shots and pictures are really helpful, and colors make it a lot more interesting.	<i>Kay</i>
<i>General agreement on this, though there may be a need for</i>	

<p><i>instructors to create their own screen shots, to accommodate variations among different browsers and operating systems.</i></p>	
<p>Very helpful to design screen shots so they can be photocopied (blk & wht) and used as reference/reinforcement pages for students to take home.</p>	<p><i>Michael</i></p>
<p>As a teaching manual it may be too detailed and too scripted for teachers, but it is not too detailed for students, who will be hungry for handouts.</p>	<p><i>Dick</i></p>
<p>Consider designing manual as a binder, with teacher’s guide to left, and student handout to right (ready to take out and photocopy, as needed). Important to recognize and respect the experience and sophistication of older adults, and not “talk down to them”.</p>	<p><i>Michael</i></p>
<p><i>There was general agreement on the issue of respect and a discussion of the manual’s instruction to “ask a student to read aloud”. Among the several considerations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>○ the possibility that seniors may be uncomfortable reading aloud, or may have difficulty seeing in order to read.</i> <i>○ the value (as a teaching tool) of hearing as well as seeing</i> <i>○ possibility of reading to them, rather than asking them to read aloud</i> <i>○ the risk, by reading to students who can read perfectly well, of seeming to treat them like children</i> <p><i>The general sense is that this is something each instructor should handle with sensitivity on a student by student basis.</i></p>	
<p>Beginning the class with an interview of students is a good way to figure out how to best 1) help them; and 2) make the class relevant to their interests.</p> <p>Handouts – yes. All at once – no (it’s just too overwhelming).</p> <p>Two rules in my classes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You don’t make mistakes in this class, you have a <i>learning experience</i>. (And I draw attention to it so that others can learn from it as well.) 2. If I go too fast, you have to stop me. 	<p><i>Staton</i></p>
<p>Re.: the <i>Senior Friendly Teaching Tips</i> – good, but need to be put in consistently, <i>either</i> once, at the beginning of the manual <i>or</i> at the beginning of each lesson.</p> <p>Re.: layout design – use hierarchy and indentation design so that message is instantly clear, even if copied in black and white.</p> <p>Re.: classroom setup – there are so many variables that are out of the control of the instructor, beginning with a long list of different operating systems.</p>	<p><i>Michael</i></p>
<p><i>General discussion of the enormity of the range of possible classroom set-ups, often older systems, compounded by students’ questions about their computers at home. Some of the difficulties</i></p>	

<p><i>cited were:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>wide variation of operating systems</i> ○ <i>often no sound cards</i> ○ <i>no guarantee of looking at video</i> ○ <i>may or may not be a computer terminal for the instructor</i> ○ <i>may or my not be equipment for overhead projection</i> <p><i>Because there are so many variables, it would be helpful to include a checklist and suggestion to instructors to check classroom ahead of time, paying particular attention to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>layout of room</i> ○ <i>operating system</i> ○ <i>equipment availability</i> 	
<p>Screen shots should include screen captures of some of the video</p>	<p><i>Michael</i></p>
<p>There are so many variables</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the <u>minimal</u> requirements? 2. It would be best to keep technological requirements to a minimum <p>The focus is on 2 specific websites. It is important to try to keep them <i>simple</i> and <i>information rich</i>.</p>	<p><i>Dick</i></p>
<p>In addition to computer set-up variations among classrooms, there are variations among students.</p> <p>Can't over emphasize the importance of <u>simplicity</u> in the website.</p>	<p><i>Staton</i></p>
<p>What is the minimum environment to teach the lessons effectively?</p>	<p><i>Don</i></p>
<p>“ADDIE”:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Attention ○ D ○ D ○ I ○ E <p>Suggest putting health at the beginning of each lesson, as that is what these students are interested in and it is what will get their attention.</p> <p>Suggest using serif typeface (e.g., Times Roman) for the body, as it is easier to read</p>	<p><i>Michael</i></p>
<p>Not only is it easier to read, we are more likely to retain the content of text presented in a serif typeface. Additional comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ maximum 5”-6” line length ○ large font size is good ○ bullets are good, extra space between them would help. (arrows may be overused) ○ lists are good ○ formatting needs to be consistent 	<p><i>Staton</i></p>

It's important to agree on the format and then use it consistently throughout.	<i>Don</i>
Emphasize <i>Quality</i> from the beginning. There is a lot of information on the web, but this is about getting <u>quality</u> health information. Some additional tips for teaching older adults: 1. "Don't be afraid – you can't hurt the computer." 2. "Have fun!" 3. Ask permission – "May I use your mouse?" "May I touch your hand?"	<i>Kay</i>
Spelling out expectations about what the class will cover will help avoid disappointment or confusion.	<i>Fred</i>
Good to have <i>Goals</i> for each lesson; also <i>Review</i> .	<i>Carol</i>
I never assume every set of eyes sees the same thing, or what I think they're seeing.	<i>Francis</i>
I handle this by positioning the instructor's terminal at the back of the room. RE.: <i>Recap</i> – too many bullets.	<i>Don</i>
Begin by asking if there are any questions from the last session.	<i>Kay</i>
Best to keep images simple, but if the information is displayed in layers or segments, it is possible to gradually build complexity. Marketing plays an important role in making people aware of a website.	<i>Dick</i>
Handouts need to be numbered	<i>Michael</i>
Probably need to establish a set of minimum requirements for the instructor.	<i>Dick</i>
<p><i>Reaction to scripted version generally that it was stilted and simplistic, but provided a good starting place. Good reaction to idea of somehow merging detailed script with less detailed descriptions. This would result in a manual that would be useful for instructors with a wider range of experience and teaching styles. In addition, it could more easily adapt to the needs of each class, providing more basic instruction where needed, but easily skipping it for students who came in with more computer experience. The incorporation of handouts into the manual was again seen as vital.</i></p> <p><i>There were multiple suggestions that the manual guide instructors (and hence students) to look up things that would be relevant and interesting to the students (e.g., seniors would be more interested in looking for information on "cardiology", than the name of the head of an organization).</i></p> <p><i>Some discussion on the importance of developing "critical listening" skills with the computer.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>With so much information out there, it is important to teach</i> 	

<p><i>not only how to find information, but how to find quality <u>information</u>.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Once you have the information, how do you determine its credibility (e.g., what is the date of the information and how do you find it</i> ○ <i>How can you use the information; what are the next steps to take once you have it?</i> ○ <i>How can you cite the information, so that future conversations (with a doctor, for example) are more productive?</i> 	

The meeting concluded with division into three teams:

- (1) Rural: Carol, Kay, John, Kelly
- (2) Suburban: Francis, Dick, John
- (3) Urban: Don, Michael, Staton

Members of these teams conferred briefly at the end of the meeting and will coordinate their efforts over the coming months to test the revised manual on a total of 36 older adults (each team having responsibility for an assigned combination of teaching and observing a total of 4 lessons with a total of 12 students).

Lesson Wrap-up Questionnaire

*“Health on the Web for Older Adults: Learning about
NIHSeniorHealth and MedlinePlus”*

Please give your opinions about the following and mail back to Doug (**mail by Friday November 11th**) in stamped envelope (1451 Middle Way, Ste 9, Arnold MD, 21012). Please put an overall 1-to-10 rating for each of the A-through-J sections, where:

- 1 means *poor*,
- 5 means *adequate*,
- 10 means *outstanding*

(A) Guide Introduction

OVERALL RATING: _____

1. The best thing about the Guide Introduction is:

2. The top two changes I would make to the Guide Introduction are:

Sections B through F refer to lessons 2 - 8 (i.e., NIHSeniorHealth chapters), and sections G through J refer to lessons 9 - 12 (i.e., MedlinePlus chapters).

(B) Chapter Introductions

OVERALL RATING: _____

(NIHSeniorHealth chapters 2-8)

1. The best thing about the chapter introductions are

2. The chapter introductions should also include

(C) Chapter Content

(NIH Senior Health chapters 2-8)

OVERALL RATING: _____

1. Overall, I think what is being taught in the chapters is
2. To improve the content of the chapters, I would

(D) Chapter Exercises

(NIH Senior Health chapters 2-8)

OVERALL RATING: _____

1. Overall, I think the exercises for students are
2. One exercise I would recommend is

(E) Chapter Pedagogy

(NIH Senior Health chapters 2-8)

OVERALL RATING: _____

1. Overall, I thought the instructional approach is
2. To improve the instructional approach, I would

(F) Chapter Format

(NIH Senior Health chapters 2-8)

OVERALL RATING: _____

1. I thought the format (layout, colors, highlighting devices, etc.) of the lessons was

2. To improve the chapter format, I would

(G) Chapter Content

(MedlinePlus chapters 9-12)

OVERALL RATING: _____

1. Overall, I think what is being taught in the chapters is

2. To improve the content of the chapters, I would

(H) Chapter Exercises

(MedlinePlus chapters 9-12)

OVERALL RATING: _____

1. Overall, I think the exercises for students are

2. One exercise I would recommend is

(I) Chapter Pedagogy **OVERALL RATING:** _____
(*MedlinePlus chapters 9-12*)

1. Overall, I thought the instructional approach was

2. To improve the instructional approach, I would

(J) Chapter Format **OVERALL RATING:** _____
(*MedlinePlus chapters 9-12*)

1. I thought the format (layout, colors, highlighting devices, etc.) of the lessons was

2. To improve the chapter format, I would