Improving quality of fall prevention and management in elderly patients using information technology: The impact of computerized decision support

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I am aware that the reader may not need to know all of this, but I feel the need to tell them this. 

–Jean-Jacques Rousseau

The first spark to proceed along the path of science came for me at the age of 15, when we were given an assignment to write an essay on the application of technology in medicine. I still remember when I heard my essay being chosen as the best, I had a feeling that this was the path I was going to take. Heartfelt thanks to my parents and immediate family, who encouraged me, gave me the opportunity and support to study abroad the founding act was laid to stand where I am standing now and write the acknowledgment of my doctorate thesis.

My studies in the Netherlands at the Vrije Universiteit and the Universiteit van Amsterdam was the most wonderful, exciting and eventful time of my life. I got the opportunity to meet amazing people, and I have absolute and immeasurable gratitude for many of them. Being a teaching assistant since I was a second year bachelor student for different classes, helping with redesigning the curriculum, and supervising undergraduates projects, during my bachelors and masters were all infinitely instructive and valuable to shaping my scientific outlook. Prof. Heringa, my bachelor supervisor, taught me how to write a proposal for funding during my undergraduate education and I am still grateful to him. My master internship made me an absolute enthusiast about the topic of computerized decision support, and guided me on the specific path to where I am standing now. I am infinitely grateful to many people for this. I dare to say that pursuing my PhD was by far the most insightful episode of my life.
I feel privileged that Ameen, my promoter and thesis supervisor during my Master essentially “kidnapped” me from another university during the final round of my interviews for a PhD position, after he got a phone call as a referent to confirm my CV. I still feel the laughter on my face when I recall he called me and told me that he found it difficult to be honestly positive about me to this group, because he wanted me to do my PhD under his supervision. Ameen and Sophia magically convinced me to accept the PROFIT-project. They introduced me to a new passion for falls and improving elderly care using IT. And here I am, privileged, writing this acknowledgment as their PhD student on the PROFIT project as well as member of the ICOVE team. Ameen and Sophia: I would like to express my gratitude for encouraging me to do my PhD under your supervision and for sharing your knowledge and advice with me.

Department of general practice of the AMC, GAZO-centra in Amsterdam, Amsterdam Thuiszorg (Cordaan), Medecis, Digitalis, CompuGroup Medical and Protestants Christelijke Ouderen Bond all helped me ground my ideas and research. The exclamatory constructive cooperation with these groups was astonishing. I am grateful for their assistance during this journey.

I would like to show my appreciation to the PhD committee for accepting to review my thesis and wanting to participate in my defense. I would also like to thank my fabulous paranympths Lilian and Nazanin. Lilian, after the amazing “studentenleven” and all that we went through together, it was phenomenal to do our PhD at the same time in the same department and share our experiences. Nazi: It has always been wonderful to share the peculiarities of living in the Netherlands and our PhD lives with each other. Thank you both for your support during the past 4 years and for standing beside me on the 17th of October.

My passion for pharmacovigilance grew when I met Saied in my second year of Master education and talked with him about the idea of a CDSS for drug-drug interaction (DDI) at the ICU. We managed to write a proposal and work on that as my TOP master internship. Saied’s advice was always helpful to me, especially the first one: “Marjan, you are an engineer but remember that in health care, and especially in a hospital, 1 + 1 is not always 2”. Saied: My sincere thanks for sharing your knowledge with me, for our collaboration on ICOVE outpatient projects and designing the ICOVE system together. I would also like to thank Stephanie for our fruitful collaboration in many projects, and convey my appreciation to all the collaborators with the ICOVE team for their effort, especially Derk and Bob.

I am grateful to my DDI group members for their collaboration in the DDI research-line. Dave, your quick responses were appreciated. Rob, I always admired you as a knowledgeable hospital pharmacologist, who taught me a lot. Evert, albeit short, I got the chance to work with you during my masters and very much admire you not as a knowledgeable intensivist but also as a person with a pleasant character. Thank you for your advices to improve the studies. Mathijs: your giant technical knowledge is astonishing.
My precious colleague Peter: Thanks to Sophia I got to meet you when I started with the reviews and we performed these extensive studies together and collaborated on many other studies. Our reviews are exactly as old as your daughter! It’s my turn to say it: Ik wil je van harte bedanken voor de prettige samenwerking.

I would like to show my appreciation to the students, and the geriatric and emergency departments staff of the AMC for their efforts during the projects we worked on, especially Richard, Milan and Helma.

As for my colleagues at the geriatrics department, you warmly welcomed me to your group and many of you helped me in finding my way in the world of geriatrics. Thank you for the wonderful times during the congresses especially Sofie and Ozgul. Nathalie, I sincerely appreciate and feel heartfelt gratitude for your patience to teach me the real challenges of geriatrics. Thanks for sharing your knowledge for our medication and recurrent falls studies and your support for the iPad-study. My big thanks go to Alice, Bianca and Marjon, for a very enjoyable collaboration.

I thank my roommates and all my colleagues in the department of medical informatics of the AMC for an instructive and joyful time. Thanks to Sandra, Kama, Leonie, Ellen, Jos, Tom and Nick for being there for discussing the prodigies and singularities of our PhD-life and all the amazing times. The “trombosedoopjes” were the best! I met Airin when our PhD-projects were in its infancy. From the beginning to the end, we shared the astonishing and wonderful catastrophes of developing a system. Airin: thanks for your support and listening ear which was particularly welcome. Sabine, our energy was at the same wavelength and it was wonderful to experience the peaks when they interfered. Thanks for the “gezelligheid” and your support. I enjoyed my PhD-life with all of you guys.

Thanks to all my friends, living around the world, for keeping tabs on me from a far distance or from close by, and for evincing true interest in what I am experiencing. Cheers to them for making time and spaces worthwhile. My friends in Iran, thanks for not letting the distance affect our friendship and big thanks for the wonderful time in Iran and visiting me here. The Dutchies, the Netherlands feels like home now thanks to many of you.

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Last but not least and for most, I am absolutely indebted to my dear family. I feel blessed to grow-up in such an inspiring family. Thank you and cheers to each member who let me feel loved and make life worth experiencing. From my two brothers, two of the best engineers and entrepreneurs, I learned a lot. They were not only my brothers, but also great friends with whom I could share everything. No words are enough to express
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While looking back, I see the manifestation of a visible person from the first day of the university, the first lesson, even the first minute I sat on the university couch. I remember that moment he sat beside me and offered me literally everything he had. My dearest, without any statistical test, I can conclude that I passed this journey because of all the support I received from you. My deepest and most sincere thanks for your unconditional love, your support and patience. Bedankt dat je het leven met mij viert en voor alle ruimte die je aan me geeft om mezelf te mogen zijn. Doested daram!

Marjan