

 COVID-19: last update (September 9, 2021 09:00 am)  

 uOttawa    

 Impact Stories

# Building a more connected society: How this uOttawa student created a tech start-up to combat social isolation among seniors

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND INNOVATION



When the COVID-19 lockdown began, Namrata Bagaria spent her time much like everyone else: on Zoom. But the nature of her video calls was slightly more unique: she was calling seniors from Ottawa and Toronto, new friends who joined Bagaria to exercise alongside YouTube videos and to sip coffee while chatting.

Bagaria is the co-founder and CEO of Seniors Junction, a social enterprise that uses technology to combat social isolation by providing seniors with opportunities for routine, recreation, and reflection.

“Seniors Junction is a blend of my passion and purpose,” explains the uOttawa doctoral student. “I am passionate about using digital technologies for a social cause, and I discovered working with older adults is a very rewarding and enriching experience for me.”

By hosting daily online activities on Zoom, Bagaria and Seniors Junction provide a reprieve for seniors who may be feeling socially isolated, lonely, and bored, especially during a pandemic. Seniors pay a nominal monthly fee and can join an array of activities, including guest lectures, book clubs, and poetry sharing sessions.

“As I see seniors who use our services make new friends, find new hobbies, and feel more fulfilled, I feel more determined and driven to reach each and every senior and help them find personalized tools to overcome barriers to their mental health.”

Founding a technology start-up for seniors during a global pandemic was not something Bagaria had planned — although in many ways, it’s a logical extension of her uOttawa studies.

Bagaria calls herself an AgeTech researcher and is one of the first doctoral students in uOttawa’s Digital Transformation and Innovation program, a collaboration between the Telfer School of Management, the Faculty of Arts, and the Faculty of Engineering.

Her PhD research focuses on what health technology could look like in the next 10-to-20 years. That timeline demands a lot of futuristic imagining, and Bagaria created Seniors Junction as a

solution that uses existing technologies to help people in the present day.

“I’m a practice-oriented researcher because I trained as a doctor and learned everything at the bedside,” she says. “No matter how many apps I make, unless I test it with people, it’s not real. I learn when I do my PhD research, and when I do these activities with Seniors Junction, I’m learning there, too.”

That learning is necessary. When the pandemic hit, Bagaria went from studying digital transformations to being in the midst of one. Fortunately, past experiences put her in a unique position to adapt and support others during this time of crisis.

“The pandemic involves both public health and digital health, and I have experience in both. I was like, ‘this is my moment!’”

Bagaria, who has a master’s in public health from Harvard University, founded a telemedicine company in 2012 and has been involved in the start-up scene ever since. She immigrated to Canada from India in 2017, but it was a chance encounter with a uOttawa professor that led her to the digital transformation program. Bagaria is now also involved with uOttawa’s [LIFE Research Institute](#) and [CREATE-BEST](#) [↗](#), a collaboration with the Government of Canada to engage engineering students in the creation of mobile health solutions.

Seniors Junction is the most recent addition to Bagaria’s list of activities. She has assembled a small team and sees this first year as a living lab — an opportunity to better gauge what seniors want and need. The uncertainty of the pandemic means she’s taking the business a few months at a time, testing and tweaking with a small group of seniors who have started to invite their friends.

“Even when things do open up again, there are many seniors who have limitations in mobility or are socially isolated because of economic status and other reasons, so the market for a tech solution continues to exist after COVID,” Bagaria notes.

In the meantime, you can catch her on Zoom, meeting with seniors today while continuing her uOttawa research to design the health solutions of tomorrow.

*At uOttawa, we are driven to challenge the status quo, make a difference, and become catalysts for change.*

*Our key priorities include fostering economic and community innovations that have an impact. Developing multidisciplinary*

*programs and partnerships that help students innovate is one way we're achieving our goals.*

*Learn more about what we're doing to respond with integrity and creativity to the demands of our rapidly changing world and find out how you can be part of this exciting transformation.*

---

## EMERGENCY

On campus

**613-562-5411** 

**Emergency resources** >

**Immediate support** >

## CONTACT

General

**613-562-5700** 

**General contact** >

**Find an expert** >

**Hire a CO-OP student** >

## EXPLORE

**Work here** >

**News** >

**Media** >

**uOzone** >

**Give** >

## VISIT

**Campus tours** >

**Parking and sustainable transportation** >

**Campus map** >

**Library** >

**Book an event** >



[Privacy](#)

[Accessibility](#)