

Keeping tabs on elderly, as Dick Tracy would

CHRIS GRIFFITH The Australian May 07, 2013 12:00AM



Paul Apostolis, front, talks to his brother Peter via the smart watch they invented after their father had a stroke and needed closer monitoring. Picture: Sam Mooy Source: The Australian

TWO Sydney brothers are launching a personal security smart watch they say will assist care of the elderly, at a time Australia braces for its "silver tsunami" of aged baby boomers.

Peter and Paul Apostolis described their SOS Mobile Watch as a Generation X creation that offered security to baby boomer family members and peace of mind to relatives and carers.

The SOS Mobile Watch has a built-in SIM card and a GPS chip, and lets its wearer communicate with carers Dick Tracy-style, initiating calls through their watch at the touch of a button.

"Essentially it's a GSM, GSP device, a mobile personal-security response device," Peter Apostolis said. KORE Wireless, which services the global machine-to-machine communications market, is providing SIM communications. It will operate on the Optus network nationally.

The watch has three SOS buttons which lets its wearer contact any of three carers or family members, with their numbers programmed in. While outgoing calls are restricted to carers, anyone can call in and say hello.

It also features GPS for real-time tracking. To ensure a wearer's privacy, only the three nominated carers can track a wearer's location.

"If your loved one has a fall, is incapacitated and can't press the button, and is not responding to a call, you can send a command to the watch and it will open up a two-way communication channel automatically without them having to press a button," Peter Apostolis said.

Paul Apostolis said the brothers began researching the idea after their father suffered a stroke while driving. He had since recovered and had been trialling the watch for 18 months, he said.

They had contacted aged-care providers who were looking at solutions in telecare, assisted living and mobile health solutions.

Peter Apostolis, who spent 20 years in the health informatics industry, and Paul, a former national advertising manager at Fairfax, formed two companies together last year.

The first, Kenotome Solutions, is an information management consultancy while the start-up, mCareWatch, is their vehicle for the watch. Paul Apostolis said family and friends had funded development, not outside investors.

They had formed a private advisory panel with government, health informatics and academic backgrounds.

The brothers said the watch had been "a-tick" certified by ACMA and would be available from the middle of this month. They were planning to extend push-button care to a call centre and would release an Android app for family and carers.

The SOS Mobile Watch will be available on a two-year plan for \$39 a month, or for \$399 outright, which includes 12 months of data use.

Peter Apostolis said he had contacts in Hong Kong, fostered from working with the Department of Health there. They had helped him forge relationships with Chinese manufacturers.