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Angelo Costa, Paulo Novais, Vicente Julian, Grzegorz J. Nalepa

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# Cognitive Assistants

Angelo Costa<sup>a</sup>, Paulo Novais<sup>a</sup>, Vicente Julian<sup>b</sup>, Grzegorz J. Nalepa<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*ALGORITMI - University of Minho, Portugal*

<sup>b</sup>*Departamento de Sistemas Informáticos y Computación (DSIC), Universitat Politècnica de Valencia, Spain*

<sup>c</sup>*AGH University of Science and Technology, Jagiellonian University, Poland*

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## 1. Introduction

Society is ageing fast. A number of studies [1, 2, 3, 4] confirm this trend and highlight a negative consequence of this trend: the increased lack of care and assistance for the elderly. Elderly care (paid and unpaid) requires a high cost for the families [3], monetarily, physically, and psychologically. This cost is hard to translate to a single value, and even harder to attain help from governmental sources or external help. Furthermore, family members who provide care to their elderly relatives often report high tension levels in their relationships, degrading the quality of life for all parties [3].

From an economics perspective there are two serious issues: the lack of money for formal or informal care and the decreasing availability of formal medical care. Families are now facing serious economical stress by having elderly people under their care [3]. Elderly people tend to have health issues that require expensive treatments. Aggravating this situation, some elderly people require constant assistance, but most families are unable to hire a nurse, with the result that a family member then needs to take up this task, possibly impacting on family income. Governments are unable to cover all aspects of assistance or subsidise elderly care. For instance, in the United Kingdom there is currently a serious shortage of available hospital beds, which in particular is affecting the elderly population [5]. As a result, hospitals ask people to stay at home if possible, and discharge people sooner.

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*Email addresses:* [acosta@di.uminho.pt](mailto:acosta@di.uminho.pt) (Angelo Costa), [pjon@di.uminho.pt](mailto:pjon@di.uminho.pt) (Paulo Novais), [vinglada@di.uminho.pt](mailto:vinglada@di.uminho.pt) (Vicente Julian), [gjn@agh.edu.pl](mailto:gjn@agh.edu.pl) (Grzegorz J. Nalepa)

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