FIGURE 7. An Emerging Model—Phase 4

Environment → Population Characteristics → Health Behavior → Outcomes

Health Care System → Enabling Resources → Need → Personal Health Practices → Perceived Health Status

External Environment → Predisposing Characteristics → Use of Health Services → Evaluated Health Status

Consumer Satisfaction

Revisiting the Behavioral Model and Access to Medical Care: Does it Matter?
Old Age and the Internet

Older Americans are active on many fronts, but they are quite different from the rest of the population when it comes to their use of technology. While 68% of those under age 65 say they used the internet in the past 24 hours, only 28% of those 65 and older did the same. Internet usage drops off most sharply after age 75. Of those ages 65-74, 40% used the Internet in the past 24 hours. That share falls to 16% among those 75 and older.

While there is a wide gap in internet usage by age, older Americans are gaining ground. According to the Pew Research Center’s Internet & American Life Project, the biggest increase in internet use over the past few years can be seen among older adults—specifically those ages 70-75. The older adults who are online are more likely than those under 30 to use the internet for gathering information, emailing and shopping. Older users are less likely than young adults and teens to use the internet for socializing and entertainment.16

In the latest Pew Research survey, among all adults ages 65 and older, men are almost twice as likely as women to have used the internet in the past 24 hours (39% vs. 20%). There is no gender gap among those under 65. In addition, older whites are much more likely than older blacks to have gone online: 31% of whites ages 65 and older say they used the internet in the past 24 hours, compared with 17% of blacks 65 and older. There is a similar racial gap among those under 65, however, it is not as pronounced.

Older adults who have attended or graduated from college are nearly three times as likely as those with less education to regularly use the internet. Half of those 65 and older who went to college say they used the internet in the past 24 hours, compared with only 17% of those who never attended college. There is a similar, though not as substantial, gap among those under age 65 in internet use by education level.

While only 28% of older Americans use the internet on a daily basis, the percentage who say they use it at least occasionally is significantly higher. Among those 65 and older, 42% use the internet at least occasionally. This compares with 82% of those under 65. More than half of those 65-74 (55%) use the internet, and that share decreases steadily with age. One-third of those 75-84 go online at least occasionally, as do 16% of those 85 and older. Overall, 40% of older adults say they send or receive email at least occasionally—including 51% of those 65-74 and 29% of those 75 and older. Among those under age 65, 75% use email at least occasionally.

16 See Jan 28, 2009 Pew Internet & American Life Project survey report “Generations Online in 2009.”