

New Healthcare Innovation Hub will aid independent living for the elderly

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As part of its involvement with the European INNOVAge (<http://www.innovage-project.eu/>) project, which aims to implement new policies for eco-independent living, the South East Health Technologies Alliance (SEHTA (<http://www.sehta.co.uk>)) has launched a UK Healthcare Innovation Hub – a centre of excellence where high tech entrepreneurs, academics, researchers and policymakers can meet, network and develop new and innovative healthcare concepts.

The UK Innovation Hub is one of 14 'InnoHubs' being launched across Europe. Its primary aim is to assist with the development of new and innovative products and services that will enable elderly individuals to benefit from living in smarter homes. The UK Hub will operate in direct support of the UK Government's '3 Million Lives' initiative which aims to enhance the lives of millions of people with chronic conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease, by accelerating the rollout of telecare and telehealth services across England.

"Because of improvements in medicine, people are living longer and as a result there is a growing need for smarter homes that are best suited to their needs," explains Dr David Parry, CEO of SEHTA. "At the same time, individuals are increasingly suffering with long-term conditions, such as dementia, heart disease, diabetes and hypertension. Rather than keeping people in hospital or care homes, there is a growing realization among many that it is better for individuals to remain in the comfort of their own homes.

"Although there are many individuals, groups and companies with great ideas, new concepts and emerging products and services in this space, what is lacking is a centrally coordinated approach to come up with appropriate solutions. The purpose of the UK Innovation Hub is to act as a catalyst for bringing together people with the common interest of helping elderly people to live independently, rather than spending unnecessary time in hospital or homes. A further goal is to ensure that the cost of healthcare is reduced whilst improving the levels of care that individuals receive."

One example of where the UK Innovation Hub will examine and explore new independent living healthcare solutions is the UK smart metering programme, where plans are under way to put 53 million smart meters in homes and businesses as part of a government strategy to reduce energy consumption. The smart meter is a hub that collects information on utility usage, displaying it locally and transmitting the data to utility companies. It has already been shown that this hub can collect data and transmit messages from others such as the health services. The challenge is ensuring that technological and organisational issues are resolved.

In running the UK Innovation Hub, SEHTA's role will include: enhancing cooperation between industry, government, academic and research institutions; seeking, receiving, analysing, interpreting and disseminating information and knowledge related to EU and other funding opportunities through the INNOVAge web portal; and supporting the regional innovation strategy in healthcare.

Between the 4th and the 6th of December, the 14 INNOVAge project partners are meeting in London to explore the challenges faced in the UK and look at solutions and approaches that have been successful in

each of their countries. The INNOVage project involving 14 European regions is partly funded under the INTERREG (<http://www.interreg4c.eu>) IVC programme.

SEHTA has been focused on the telecare and telehealth market for the past three years. In September 2009, SEHTA established its pioneering International Centre for Excellence in Telecare (ICE-T), a market-led approach to telecare and telehealth. Since its launch, ICE-T has grown to become a dynamic network of more than 1,500 contacts in companies, medicine and academia in the UK and internationally. The initiative has also helped to raise more than £1.5 million for innovative businesses involved in the development and delivery of telecare and telehealth products and services.

For further information about INNOVage and Innovation Hubs, visit: <http://www.innovage-project.eu/>

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The South East Health Technologies Alliance (SEHTA) is a company limited by guarantee, owned by its 1300 members.

Its mission is to facilitate the profitable and sustainable growth of companies and service providers in health and social care and the health technologies sector – pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, medical devices, diagnostics and telecare/telehealth.

SEHTA drives collaboration and provides support services to members from Academia, Business and Care/Clinicians to address UK and international market needs