

NIHR INVENTION FOR INNOVATION (i4i) PROGRAMME Healthcare Technology Co-operatives

Based in two NHS Trusts, the pilot Healthcare Technology Co-operatives (HTCs) being funded as part of the **NIHR Invention for Innovation (i4i) Programme**, are a new type of NHS-led virtual organisation which will bring together a wide spectrum of stakeholders with a common purpose. These include patients and carers, academics, clinicians, nurses and other healthcare providers working in partnership with industry to catalyse the development of innovative healthcare technology products.

With a growing number of people living with chronic conditions there is significant potential to influence future investment from industry and the direction of patient services. This is a relatively new area of health research where the development and use of life enhancing equipment for everyday use has traditionally been under-funded and slow.

The pilot co-operatives fulfil a recommendation of the Healthcare Industries Taskforce and are a result of collaboration between government, industry and research councils working with patient groups and clinicians. The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and the Technology Strategy Board (TSB) - with support from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council and the Medical Research Council - are investing up to £250,000 a year for two years in each of the pilot co-operatives.

The pilots will be used to assess whether creating the environment for a unique collaboration led by clinicians and involving patients/users, industry and academia to act as a national resource yields benefits for both the health and wealth agenda.

1. Bowel Function Healthcare Technology Co-operative

The **Bowel Function Healthcare Technology Co-operative** is hosted within the Centre for Academic Surgery at Barts and The London NHS Trust and School of Medicine and Dentistry with associated nodes in academic clinical units in Bristol, Edinburgh, Durham and Hull. Working together with industry and a number of charities including Bowel & Cancer Research, Continence Foundation, IA, InContact and NACC, this HTC aims to identify and develop new devices and procedures to improve the healthcare outcomes for those affected by disorders of bowel function.

Initially, they will focus their activities on problems of the colon and rectum, including new technologies for the diagnosis and management of disorders of evacuation, an operative procedure to preserve the sphincter and avoid a permanent stoma in a particular group of patients; better stoma care technologies and a novel training system for healthcare professionals.

This HTC can be contacted through the website at www.bfhtc.org.uk which also provides more information on a range of other activities.

2. Devices for Dignity Healthcare Technology Co-operative

The **Devices for Dignity Healthcare Technology Co-operative (D4D-HTC)** is a clinician-led formal but responsive collaboration between clinicians, patients, academia and industry that acts as a focus for "technology pull" into the NHS. Based at the Sheffield Teaching Hospitals Foundation Trust (STHFT), with collaborators selected from Trusts and Universities across England, and with strong industrial input, the D4D will be a national resource established to address areas of unmet clinical need. Innovations in treatments and technologies have the potential to make a high impact by reducing morbidity and improving quality of life for a large population of patients, and improving the effectiveness of the health and care services supporting them.

The D4D-HTC will focus on the design, development and evaluation of medical devices to improve healthcare quality and well-being for patients/clients with long term conditions. In addressing dignity and utility, the D4D-HTC will exploit a generic device development and evaluation methodology which crosses clinical boundaries and delivers healthcare benefits across the age spectrum. The D4D chosen themes for initial emphasis will be assistive technology, urinary incontinence and renal dialysis. A key aim of the D4D-HTC is to accelerate the development of innovative medical devices to the market.

More details can be found on the D4D-HTC web site: [**www.devicesfordignity.org.uk**](http://www.devicesfordignity.org.uk)

May 2008
www.nihr-ccf.org.uk