



Contract no. 016817

SmartHEALTH

Smart Integrated Biodiagnostic Systems for Healthcare

INSTRUMENT: Integrated Project

PRIORITY: FP6-2004-IST-NMP-2

D9.1 Café Scientifique on SmartHEALTH

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PU	Public	✓
PP	Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services)	
RE	Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including Commission Services)	
CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including Commission Services)	

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1. Introduction

This event was the first “trial” public engagement event and D9.1 for WP9: a café scientifique on the SmartHEALTH project. The speaker was Dr Simon Woods Policy Ethics and Life Sciences Research Institute (Work Package Leader of WP9) A response was given by Sue Stirling, the director of the Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR) a left of centre think-tank. (www.ippr.org.uk/ipprnorth). The public audience raised various issues of interest including: questions about the cost of this new technology; the accuracy of results, the confidentiality of the electronic medical records, the adequate regulation of devices over the internet and the availability of SmartHEALTH technology to both rich and poor nations.

2. Café Scientifique: the process

2.1. *Setting the scene for the public discussion*

The café scientifique is part of a wider public engagement series called Café Culture. The aim is to invite the public to an open forum to discuss science topics within an informal setting (www.cafescientifique.org). The focus of this café was the SmartHEALTH Technology: Ethical and social aspects.

The meeting began with a general introduction including an overview and introduction to nanotechnology, its history, its appeal to science fiction writers and the current state of nanotechnology research.

The talk then moved on to a description of the SmartHEALTH project and its central aims to produce a portable diagnostic/monitoring device with a “smart” link to electronic data-bases. Following this a number of general observations were made by the speaker and questions were raised:

- Comparison was made between the potential for these new medical diagnostic devices and existing technologies such as rapid lab tests and (over the counter) commercially available self-testing devices (such as diabetes).
- Governmental control and regulation were considered – how would the device be regulated, who would control it and how would quality standards be maintained and enforced?
- Informatics aspects – how would a patient’s health information be safeguarded from other organisations gaining access? Who would have control over this data and what are appropriate uses of the data – epidemiology or forensic?

There was a fifteen minute refreshment break then the meeting was opened up to the audience for general discussion.

2.2. *Public discussion and themes discussed*

Three main themes emerged during discussion, as outlined below:

1. Technology related themes: how near to application is the current technology? How portable would the device be? What are the likely costs to a government health service? Ease of access?
2. Applicability/utility related themes: questions were raised on the accuracy of the results?. Was this device a tool for medics and technicians or for self-

use in the home? Would counselling be a requirement? What would be the impact be on current health systems, in terms of current infrastructure?

3. Social context/market related themes: Would the technology be subject to consumer demand? How could it be regulated given the internet potential for obtaining regulated technology and materials? Issues of equity between rich and poor individuals/nations?

3. Conclusions

The Café Scientifique achieved its overall aim of presenting the concept of the SmartHEALTH project to the wider public, during the early development stages. The audience was smaller than anticipated, due to the day being one of the hottest of the year. However, the discussion was lively and the issues raised were varied, highlighting that the SmartHEALTH project is of interest to the wider public, as represented by the audience. As such, plans to develop more public engagements are underway.

Note: the main aim of these cafés is to invite the audience to raise their own social and ethical questions on the topic presented, and then discuss these issues in an open forum, rather than seeking any definitive answers to questions raised. Most of the issues raised during this café cannot be adequately answered at such an early stage in the project. However, the themes of the café have been discussed with the project co-ordinator, Calum McNeil, and it is interesting to note that none of the themes are new to previous internal discussions on the potential social and ethical issues of the SmartHEALTH project.

“Come and share your views”

with

Prof Calum McNeil

who will discuss

a new EU healthcare technology – currently under development in the SmartHEALTH project, with a budget of €21.8M, that aims to **improve cancer diagnosis & treatment** by:

- **Reducing waiting time for test results** (*from days to minutes*) by moving testing from remote laboratories to local clinics, GPs surgeries - or even a patient’s home;
- Creating **more personalised treatment** by allowing GPs quick access to patients’ electronic health records.

The current focus is on *breast, cervical, and colorectal cancer*

Monday 17th July, 7.00pm

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CAFÉ SCIENTIFIQUE*

**World Headquarters
(Curtis Mayfield House, Carliol Square, Newcastle)**

Bar available.

No entrance charge.

No booking required.

*Further details, please contact **Fionagh Thomson** or **Tom Martin**, Policy Ethics Life Sciences, Newcastle University. 0191 241 8640; PEALS@ncl.ac.uk*