

Open Day at the BioMed Centre



The BioMed Health Technology Co-operative (HTC) celebrated its 3rd anniversary by inviting guests from its stakeholder communities to an Open Day on 14th February 2008. The focus was on providing a hands-on experience of the activities of BioMed. To set the scene there was a series of short presentations from the different stakeholder perspectives. We were privileged to hear Dr Bill Maton-Howarth and Mrs Jill Dhell from the Department of Health (DH), who described the BioMed HTC as ‘a microcosm, epitomising and delivering DH strategy for innovation in healthcare’. Mr James Urie from Mediplus Ltd gave an industry perspective emphasising how organisations such as BioMed are invaluable in providing companies with the clinical insight needed to direct product development and the resources and expertise to evaluate new products. Mr Anthony Timoney, a urology consultant at Southmead hospital and principal investigator for a number of BioMed clinical studies, explained the complexity of bladder dysfunction, and put the need to develop new, minimally invasive, continence management devices into the wider context of bladder treatment as a whole.

The patient perspective was eloquently expressed by Victoria Houlton, whose accident 5 years ago left her tetraplegic. She described the frustration of living in an age of huge technological advancement yet consigned to having a Foley catheter for her bladder drainage; a device ‘that should surely be considered a museum relic by now’. She described BioMed’s work as an opportunity for hope.

Two awards were made during the day. The first was a cheque for £1000 to the winner of a design competition for students in the South West and South Wales. Their challenge was to design a low maintenance fluid dispenser for care home residents that would encourage and monitor drinking, and was easy and appealing to use. Mr Rhys Thomas from the School of Industrial Design at the Swansea Institute of Higher Education won the prize which was kindly donated and presented by Mrs Joan Johnson of the John James Bristol Foundation. The second award was a token of thanks to Professor Roger Feneley, from the BioMed HTC, for his enormous contribution to the Partnership. The award was presented by Ms Margot Cooper, President of Limbs and Things, whose company cleverly crafted the model ‘Roger’ resplendent in grey suit holding a Foley catheter!

A tour of the BioMed Centre followed with four rooms dedicated to key subjects. Guests were encouraged to try their hand at catheterisation using a Limbs & Things model and the new Mediplus Suprapubic insertion kit. There was a demonstration of the bladder models used to test new materials for resistance to catheter blockage and to view the infamous *Proteus mirabilis* bacterium, responsible for catheters encrustation, thanks to the introduction of the *lux* gene that makes the organism fluoresce. Visitors were able to see a variety of products and devices at various stages of the innovation pathway from concept to adoption and hear about

the role the BioMed plays in development and evaluation. The final room was dedicated to the importance of fluid intake and the five finalists in the fluid dispenser competition explained how they approached the task and reached their final design entry.

The day proved to be a great success, with guests gaining a greater understanding of the work carried out by the BioMed HTC and a greater appreciation of the challenges faced by those who struggled to retain their dignity and quality of life with a long-term catheter.

A. Long. Feb 08

The BioMed Centre was first established in 1998 as a research clinic to investigate long-term catheterisation. In 2004 it became part of the Bristol Urological Institute, a registered charity, and moved into new purpose-built accommodation funded by charities, individual donors and the North Bristol NHS Trust. The BioMed Centre undertook a programme of collaborative research with government grant funding, and projects such as NuTap, MedLink and *Foresight* led to the development of prototypes for devices such as an automatic catheter valve, a *Proteus* sensor, a catheter training model, a novel suprapubic-urethral catheter and two new Foley catheter designs.

In 2005, under the Health Technology Devices programme, the BioMed Healthcare Technology Cooperative was formed. This crystallised the concept of multi-sector collaboration as a means of accelerating the development and introduction of new technologies to improve patient and carer quality of life. With 7 industry partners, a user organisation and two government funded organisations, the BioMed Centre undertook a new programme of research, innovation and education building on the substantial body of work carried out under the leadership of Professor Roger Feneley and Dr David Stickler. Further information on project progress can be found on www.biomedhtc.org