

Tackling Ageing Continence Through Theory, Tools And Technology

Project News in Brief

IMPROVING INTERVENTIONS AND SERVICES

In the last newsletter, we reported that work has recently begun on the Sheffield work package. We will be recruiting patients and carers from continence clinics in Sheffield and Barnsley and interviewing patients to find out about their needs. We will be also be asking what characteristics of health and social care services are most important to them. We will be investigating what patients and families believe about the causes of incontinence and what might encourage them or stop them from seeking help with the problem. Data collection is due to begin early next year.

SMART UNDERWEAR



The University of Manchester is developing the sensor and signalling system for the TACT³ Smart Underwear. The sensor is made from conductive yarn, incorporated into the underwear. If a continence pad leaks the wearer will be alerted by a text message to a mobile phone.

A new feature recently added to the electronics system is a vibrating alert that makes the electronics discretely vibrate when a pad leak is detected. There is the option for vibration mode to be switched on and off, or for a text message to be sent. Dr Fernandes can be seen on the left, presenting this work at the Institute of Physics Sensors and their Applications XV conference on the 6th October 2009.

INCONTINENCE THE ENGINEERING CHALLENGE VII DECEMBER 2009 AT THE IMECHE

This biennial event started in 1995 and has been invaluable in stimulating much needed research in the continence field. This two-day seminar will bring together users, carers, researchers, commercial designers and producers, clinical practitioners and engineers, to exchange the latest research ideas and to review and challenge the status quo in continence technology. Eleanor van den Heuvel, Bosco Fernandes and Norman Ratcliffe will be presenting our work on the TACT³ project.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING

On the 1st October we held our second Project Management Board meeting at the Bristol Urological Institute. We presented progress reports and results on each of the work packages. The meeting was an excellent opportunity to exchange ideas and knowledge and to help guide us to work towards the aims of the project. Many thanks to Jo Worthington for her kind help in facilitating the meeting.



Photograph above, the TACT³ committee at the Project Management Board meeting

Meetings

CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENTAL BARRIERS TO CONTINENCE

Project News

The Challenging Environmental Barriers work package sets out to look at the central issues that prevent people from accessing public and away from home lavatories. Access may be restricted or difficult, due to the lack of public facilities in our cities, towns and rural areas. Facilities that do exist may be avoided due to poor management and maintenance, whilst for some people the design of the toilet cubicle may not be adequate to their personal needs.

Researchers are consulting directly with users aged between 1 – 101 to build up a picture of the user requirements and provision preferences that span across ages groups. As well as consulting directly with users, the project will be talking to providers of public and away from home toilets to understand the issues faced in public toilet provision. By direct consultation with these two main groups, the researchers aim to develop innovative design solutions that cater to the needs of the whole population, but especially considering the needs of an ageing population.

The project will also be documenting examples of current provision. The photo to the right, shows the new design of a unisex toilet that includes hand washing facilities within the cubicle. The research will be using design solutions to evaluate if such provision is suitable and acceptable to users and providers.



The research has just begun with analysis of the 101 interviews, with people who have participated in the research. Initial findings suggest that the biggest issue for most users, of all ages and both genders, is concerns about existing toilets facilities' hygiene and cleanliness. The data from these interviews will be used to determine what the most important barriers are in general from a users' point of view, to toilet provision. Below are some of the main themes identified from our analysis:

Feeling confident that the toilet facility is clean and well looked after. This includes the provision of soap for hand washing, and a good supply of toilet paper, that is monitored and hence does not run out.

Lack of privacy that current cubicle designs offer.

For women, the inadequate size of the toilet cubicle coupled with the large size of sanitary bins, often makes toileting uncomfortable and generates concerns of hygiene.

Safety in facilities' particularly by some of the younger men we spoke to.

WHAT'S NEXT?

We are confident that as the analysis continues, we will continue to identify the problems with current toilet provision in the UK and we will present the users perspective to toilet providers in the second year of the project.

NEW RESEARCH ASSOCIATE

We are very pleased to welcome Gail Knight our new Research Associate to the Helen Hamlyn Centre at the Royal College of Art. Gail has previously studied at the Royal College of Art and has an MA in Industrial Design Engineering, for which her dissertation was titled, 'The public toilet: A Women's place'. Gail began work on the TACT³ project on the 1st of October and is currently concluding and analysing the series of 101 interviews about public toilets.



7th WORLD GERONTECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE, VANCOUVER

The International Society for Gerontology presents the 7th World Gerontology Conference in Vancouver, Canada at the Marriott Pinnacle Hotel from May 27th - 30th 2010. The conference will bring together people who design, develop, prescribe, research, set policy for and use technology to enhance the health, functional capacity and quality of life of older adults. We are submitting a proposal to hold a symposium at this event.

For more information please see www.sfu.ca/isg2010

BRUNEL OLDER PEOPLE'S REFERENCE GROUP NEEDS YOU!

The Brunel Older People's Reference Group has been created by researchers who are interested in various aspects of ageing. Our aim is to investigate key issues for the large proportion of the population who are aged 50 and over. We are very keen to strengthen our links with the community and to create a database of local people who are interested in our research. We have been visiting local groups in Hillingdon to tell them about our research and how they can be involved. We are pleased to report that we now have over 100 members.

If you live locally to Brunel University and would like to be sent information on the Brunel Institute of Ageing Studies public events and information about Brunel projects that are looking for volunteers for their research studies, we would like to hear from you. Contact details can be found on the back page.

'MAKING THE MOST OF THE POTENTIAL OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY' WORKSHOP, HOSTED BY BRUNEL INSTITUTE FOR AGEING STUDIES (BIAS) AND BY KT-EQUAL



Networking at the coffee break



Delegates question the speakers



The Workshop Organisers

BIAS in conjunction with KT-Equal hosted a free conference on 17th September to present some of the latest research work, aimed at developing technology that can help older and disabled people to maintain independence and improve quality of life. Attendees included local older people, charities, occupational therapists, academics and representatives of Local Government. The day included talks and discussions led by researchers in the field of ageing. The highlights of the day were presentations by Keren Down MBE, who is the director of the Foundation for Assistive Technology (FAST) and Professor Heinz Wolff, from Brunel University who is a highly respected scientist and public figure. Felicity Jowitt presented some of our work on the TACT³ project. If you missed the workshop and would like see the presentations, they are available to download now at www.sparc.ac.uk



Demonstrating and discussing the Companion Home Shopping Project

If you would like to receive further copies of the tact³news and/or future ones please let us know. Also comments on the content and design of the tact³news would be welcome.

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Industrial Collaborator

Mark Pedley • SmartLife Technology Ltd

TACT³ gratefully acknowledge our Partners

Age Concern Barnsley • The Centre for Accessible Environments • Devices for Dignity • Help the Aged • Technology Sourcing • The British Toilet Association • The Gut Trust • The National Trust • The Simon Foundation • The Relatives and Residents Association

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