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National News

UK

New Technical Guidance Website for Providers of Healthcare Facilities

The new website 'Space for Health', linked to the Department of Health's website, brings together a whole suite of guidance (including Health Technical Memoranda, Health Building Notes and other information) into one online resource for all those involved in the procurement, management, design and planning of healthcare facilities, including NHS and non NHS providers.

Users are able to seamlessly shift between different pieces of guidance, and access nation-specific information, depending on whether their project is in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. 'Space for Health' has been developed following an extensive three-year consultation period, including stakeholder events and evaluation of a pilot website. Health Minister, Mike O'Brien said, "This brings together all the guidance in one easy to access website."

To visit the website: www.spaceforhealth.nhs.uk

New Consultation on Personal Health Budgets Launched

Care Services Minister Phil Hope Launched a new consultation on Personal Health Budgets. Personal health budgets are being piloted in primary care trusts until 2012 – direct payments will form part of these. Personal health budgets will help to create a more personalised NHS, by giving people more choice and control over how money is spent on their care.

Personal health budgets can work in three ways: A notional budget held by a commissioner; a budget managed on the individual's behalf by a third party, or a cash payment to an individual. Trusts are already able to offer the first two options, which do not involve giving money directly to individuals. The consultation seeks views on the rules for making direct payments as well as proposals for setting up and evaluating direct payment pilots. It will run until 8 January 2010. This consultation regulations and guidance to make direct payments happen.

The Netherlands

Dutch Biobank Network

The Dutch government has awarded a consortium of health research groups 22.5 million euro to establish a national biobanking infrastructure. The project, Biobanking and Biomolecular Resources Infrastructure Netherlands (BBMRI-NL), will integrate valuable clinical data and material in order to improve access to human samples.

This project will attempt to improve the accessibility and enrichment of biological and clinical data while exercising privacy protection regulations. The initiative is part of a wider 170m euro network that will eventually link European biobanks and related information resources to connect researchers across the continent.

Eight university medical centres and several other research institutes and universities are participating in the project. Professor Gertjan van Ommen, from Leiden University Medical Centre in the Netherlands, applied for the grant from the Dutch Ministry of Education through the Netherlands Organisation of Scientific Research. He believes that the integration of data and materials will accelerate research into causes and development, therapy and prevention of disease.

Denmark

Telehealth Pilots Rolled-Out

Denmark has rolled-out two telehealth pilots it now intends to implement nationally over the next three years. One of the pilots, already rolled-out at the Odense University Hospital, involves using a video conferencing service to allow foreign patients who don't speak Danish to communicate with hospital staff.

The service is linked to a call centre with multi-lingual operators allowing foreign patients to have their needs and concerns translated to receive a better diagnosis. The first interpretation centre was opened at the beginning of June 2009. Following its success, regional implementation of the

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system is expected by 2010, with a national roll-out to be completed by 2012.

The second pilot monitors around 800,000 unstable chronic obstructive pulmonary disease patients from their home. Patients who are thought to be more comfortable at home than in hospital receive a suitcase of video conferencing equipment and monitoring devices and the nurses do their normal rounds over a video conference system where they record the patients' vital signs.

Spain

Researchers Develop RFID Alert System for Elderly

Researchers at the University of Granada in Southern in Spain have developed a system that reminds elderly people and those with special needs when they forget everyday tasks like taking medication.

The system recognises the everyday actions of the user by using radio frequency identification labels. These labels are placed on objects that the individual touches most often and are used to communicate with a computer or mobile device situated in the house or at a nearby assistance centre.

The activities of users are assessed with artificial intelligence techniques to compile a list of actions such as remembering to take keys or a mobile phone before leaving the house. The system can monitor the individual's movements by assessing when they touch an object. A small alarm will go off followed by a reminder on a mobile device to prompt the user to take action.

The system is said to be beneficial to those who reject the help of others and insist on keeping their independence. In this regard, the system will not change the life of the user but the lives of those who care for them.

Germany

Action Clean Hands

The Action Clean Hands campaign has set itself the goal to establish hand disinfection as a focus for enhancing the quality and safety of patient care in hospitals in Germany by the year 2010. This issue has become even more important with the current spread of influenza.

As part of the campaign, a workshop on hospital hygiene was organised on November 12th in Frankfurt. Experts were invited to talk about personal and organisational measures and practices for hand hygiene taking into consideration legal and technical requirements.

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