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UK

The UK government has announced £4 million of funding for businesses to develop cutting-edge ideas to address some of the biggest health problems of our time. The Department of Health has opened two new competitions with up to £2 million of funding each to develop technological and innovative solutions that can:

- Change people's behaviour in order to reduce the impact of obesity and alcohol related diseases; and
- Improve the number of patients taking their medication as prescribed.

Obesity and Alcohol related diseases and patients not taking their medication as prescribed are major health challenges. Alcohol and Obesity related diseases cost the NHS over £7 billion each year and between 6-10 percent of all hospital admissions could be preventable if prescription medication was taken correctly. Businesses are invited to come up with innovative solutions to these challenges. This could be anything from a device which helps people monitor what they eat or drink or a personalised care package to help people take their medication as prescribed.

Health Minister, Lord Howe said:

"Technology and innovation have an important role to play in helping to address the healthcare challenges facing the NHS. That is why we are investing £20 million in new and creative ideas and projects which can make a difference to patients' lives.

"Today's competitions provide an opportunity to develop highly innovative solutions for some of the biggest health problems of our time and we look forward to seeing the results."

Sir David Nicholson, Chief Executive of the NHS commented:

"Investing in innovation is vital for a modern and efficient NHS- it will benefit the patient, the taxpayer and UK plc. The Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) is a key part of the Innovation, Health and Wealth agenda, which aims to spread innovation throughout the NHS.

"These competitions provide vital funding for businesses to explore, develop and test new technology before it becomes commercially available. Organisations are invited to submit their ideas, which could have a real impact on patients and the NHS."

Iain Gray, Chief Executive of the Technology Strategy Board remarked:

"The SBRI process enables government to engage with innovative ideas from industry, acting as a lead customer to address intractable challenges. It is really positive to see DH and the NHS, building on their experience of previous successful SBRI competitions, using this approach to address new areas and drive innovation."

The competitions will be run through the SBRI process and are open to all organisations, not just those in the health sector. Recent competition winners include Eykona Technologies Ltd. which has developed a novel 3D wound imaging system, that allows healthcare professionals to monitor chronic wounds more effectively and tailor treatment accordingly. This system is currently being sold to the NHS.

The competitions will be managed by NHS London and NHS Midlands and East. Businesses can find out more about the competitions by attending a briefing session, which will be held in London on 12th April. More details are available at the SBRI website.

For more information, please visit: www.innovateuk.org

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