

The Pan Bath and Swindon Primary Care Research Consortium, based at the University of Bath, held this conference in collaboration with the Bath Institute for Mechanical Engineering (BIME).

- <http://www.bath.ac.uk/health/researchsupport/pbspccr/index.html>
- <http://www.bath.ac.uk/bime/>

The Consortium has an established partnership with BIME as they continue to work on smart housing for people with dementia, improving care through the application of sensitively-designed technology. Their installations in people's homes allow users to remain independent for as long as possible; supporting Government and Primary Care Trust strategy to enable self management for chronic conditions in a community setting.

The event is organised by the prestigious KT-EQUAL network whose remit is to increase the Knowledge Transfer of research, focusing in on assisted technology within a community setting.

The progress into telecare and telehealth, which BIME is pioneering, is an area which the Consortium sees as the future in managing the increasing elderly population in our largely rural and dispersed geographical region. Swindon PCT are currently pursuing related, leading initiatives to provide a more responsive community based model of care and PCTs are seeing the future in terms of mainstreaming its use of telehealth solutions, to provide more timely and preventative care and support for people with long term conditions.

This event celebrates and explores local telehealth initiatives within the South West. The conference included presentations by national speakers, as well as a poster

session and provided an excellent opportunity for networking - the aim of the meeting was to develop new research opportunities and collaborations.

The event was opened by Dr Nigel Harris, the Director of the Bath Institute for Mechanical Engineering. Dr Harris leads a team of professional design engineers and support staff who involve disabled people and their carers as well as medical and healthcare professionals in the design process. The team places great emphasis on developing a sensitive understanding of the needs of the person and a willingness to work closely with them to evolve solutions appropriate to their needs.

Claire Goodchild, Programme Manager, National Dementia Strategy, Programme Manager at the Department of Health was our first speaker. She leads the national programme for improved community personal support and commissioning dementia services. Claire raised some thought provoking issues: Why aren't people with dementia and carers demanding telecare? What can the sector do to raise awareness? Can we think of other models of delivery?

We then heard from Mike Clarke from the Department of Health. Mike has run the Telecare and Learning Network (over 6000 members) since 2005. He is also co-project lead with the Kings Fund, on the Whole System Demonstrator Action Network. The network provides regular newsletters, a searchable database for journal articles on telecare and telehealth Google maps of services, featured articles and news from around the world. Mike expanded on the series of events that commenced in 2009 to disseminate learning from the World's largest controlled trial of telecare and telehealth to support people with long term conditions.

Anna Field, Lead for Acute and Ambulance Commissioning from Swindon PCT provided a joint talk with Helen Rollins, Community Nurse. They explained how Swindon PCT has mainstreamed its use of telehealth solutions, to provide more timely and preventative care and support for people with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). This followed a successful pilot in 2007, which improved patient's quality of life and reduced hospital admissions. The Telehealth service gives greater independence and improves the quality of life for COPD patients, enabling them to receive enhanced care in their own home and reducing the need for repeat hospital admissions.

Swindon PCT is using telehealth monitors from leading telehealthcare specialist Tunstall to monitor the health and well-being of people with COPD. The measurements can help patients to spot problems early on, which can then be dealt with before a person reaches the stage of hospital admission. As a result a patient

could potentially avoid a serious decline in health and the stress of visiting hospital. This in turn reduces unnecessary pressure on primary and acute care providers and ensures best use of healthcare resources.

Dr Clare Emmet, Programme Manager from Bristol University told us about the Healthlines study, a 5 year NIHR funded research programme which aims to develop and evaluate a telehealth intervention delivered by NHS Direct to support patients with long term health conditions. This project is ongoing until 2014.

Alison Rouse, Bath and North East Somerset Council, spoke about the challenges of bringing together health and social care provision. Within a short 18 month period, they had developed a system for single point of access to services, based around locality teams. This included shared case management, under a lead professional.

Tim Adlam, Engineer at the Bath Institute for Mechanical Engineering spoke about his research and useable technology for older people and people with dementia for over 10 years. Tim described smart home technologies that could assist with various problems that had been identified from surveys with personal carers. He described an example of the design of a cooker monitor that is suitable for use by people who are living with dementia. The device uses sensors to detect potentially hazardous situations, this information is relayed to the user and may then be used to switch off the cooker.

Finally, Dr Ben Rosser, Research Fellow at the Centre for Pain Research, University of Bath discussed the SMART2 project, an EPSRC funded Consortium which develops self-management technological interventions for long term conditions such as Stroke and Chronic Pain. This study will deliver an exciting new technology that will allow the patient to participate in their rehabilitation and offered the audience a vision of the future.

Conclusion

We had a full range of delegates from Consortia PCTs, ranging from Wiltshire to Sandwell PCT and Birmingham NHS Trusts. Agencies such as Nottingham City Council, the Welsh Assembly and delegates from Universities around the country, industry and social housing, were also present.

We learn that although home based technology was established in some parts, work to develop truly mobile applications needs further attention. Also that telehealth and telecare is relatively easy compared to the service delivery aspects! We are working now with researchers on the next stage, making the technology truly appealing to users, carers and commissioners.