



## Welcome message from David Heaney, Project Director



ITTS is now moving up a gear – from detailed business planning for the ten demonstrator projects, and into action. Equipment is being purchased; most of the projects have some early-stage interaction with real patients; we are engaging with citizens to get their views of our projects, and the evaluation is kicking into place. The teams have set themselves some targets over the winter months, so we will let you know how we get on.

ITTS has also been engaging at the strategic level with areas within the Northern Periphery not included in the project, disseminating project details and progress so far to observers in Iceland and Greenland. We have also interacted with eHealth projects in other parts of Europe, and this is opening up many opportunities. We were delighted to get a special mention from the Junior Minister, Ms Jennifer McCann, Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, Northern Ireland in her speech at the NPP Annual Conference 2012 in Derry.

There is a lot about speech and language therapy in this newsletter and it is one of our flagship projects. International speech therapy co-operation began in the Competitive Health project, but it is really moving forward in ITTS with expansion of existing services in Sweden and Scotland, and the introduction of services into Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. We have a growing "empire" of speech therapists who are working together transnationally to improve services in their own areas. This project exemplifies the ITTS philosophy of taking a good idea that has been shown to work in everyday practice in one place, and introducing it somewhere else.

We look forward to a busy winter and updating you about our progress in 2013.

*David Heaney*

*ITTS Project Director*

*Associate Director of the Centre for Rural Health, University of Aberdeen*

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## News Highlights

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Project Partner Meeting: Tromsø, Norway

On 26-27 September, the ITTS partnership gathered for the project's third face-to-face meeting. Hosted by our Norwegian Partners at the [Norwegian Centre for Integrated Care and Telemedicine \(NST\)](#), the 2-day event offered the opportunity for all the Partner countries to catch up on what each had been doing and form plans for the months ahead.

During the meeting, delegates were invited to visit the University Hospital of North Norway's renal unit to witness a demonstration of the video-consultation (VC) clinic currently running to a number of satellite sites across rural north Norway. The service has been warmly received by both staff and patients and is a shining example of how VC technology can be implemented to support clinical teams in remote areas as they treat complex conditions that would usually require travel to larger cities. The hospital is also testing VC support for home dialysis systems that help patients perform care procedures themselves in their own homes – an application that is being exported as part of ITTS. It was rewarding to meet the staff and tell them how their work has been introduced in other parts of the Programme area, and how highly regarded they are by their colleagues in other countries.



### Research Trip to Sweden

Project Researcher Dr Leila Eadie had an interesting and productive visit with the Swedish Partner team at the Norrland's University Hospital in Umeå, Västerbotten (northern Sweden). Together they discussed the demonstrator projects with the [renal](#) clinical team, visiting two of the hospital's haemodialysis wards. VC technology will connect experts in Umeå with smaller hospitals in Skellefteå and Lycksele to provide support and advice when the consultant is absent, and facilitate handover of patients after their initial assessments at the central hospital.

In addition to the visits with clinical and technical teams, Leila, Käte (Swedish team lead) and Brith (Swedish project development nurse) discussed the project evaluation plans. This proved to be a valuable visit for both Leila and the very hospitable local partners, and Leila is looking forward to similar visits with the other Partners over the coming months.

## Health and Telemonitoring NI



'Connected Health' is a term that means using technology to provide healthcare remotely, and to allow patients more freedom to lead their own lives. It often leverages readily available consumer technologies to deliver patient care outside of the hospital or doctor's office. It also aims to make healthcare more patient-centred by promoting health education and patient feedback.

ITTS projects are built on the concept of Connected Health – from the various uses of videoconferencing technology to provide healthcare access to patients in remote areas; to internet portals and smartphone applications to assist patients to better self-manage their condition; and telemonitoring to monitor patient vital signs in their homes.

In Northern Ireland, the Health Minister Mr Edwin Poots is backing [Connected Health](#) to improve patient care, enabling a more independent life. "Chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and COPD affect around three quarters of people over the age of 75. This is the generation for whom transport and mobility pose the biggest problems. The [Telemonitoring NI](#) service will allow thousands to monitor their vital signs without having to leave their own homes."

Eddie Ritson, Programme Director of the Centre for Connected Health and Social Care (CCHSC) said: "The roll-out of Telemonitoring NI represents a significant step towards providing quality care for the growing number of people with heart disease, stroke, some respiratory conditions and diabetes who want to live at home while having their conditions safely managed."

This new service will give people more information which, combined with timely advice, will enable patients to gain more control over their health while supporting them to live independently in their own homes for longer.

*Michael Howard (pictured above), a patient with COPD using Telemonitoring NI said:*

"Taking my readings is such a simple process but one that gives me huge benefits as it is an early warning system to me and also for the specialist nurses in charge of my care. Without telemonitoring I would be running back and forward to the GPs' surgery all the time to have things checked out. Having my signs monitored by a nurse means any changes in my condition are dealt with immediately and this has prevented me from being admitted to hospital – in the past I've had to spend six days in hospital any time I'm admitted with a chest infection.

"The telemonitoring is not only reassuring for me, it also gives me more control over managing my own condition and as a result I have less upheaval in my life, and I'm less of a cost to the health care system. Most importantly, it gives me peace of mind and one less thing to worry about at my age."

## Focus on...Video-Consultation

Although technology cannot replace a face-to-face visit to the doctors, videoconferencing is fast emerging as a powerful component in telemedicine initiatives worldwide.

Some of the benefits of this are:

- Expand reach of specialists to remote and rural locations
- Reduction in travel
- Faster diagnoses
- Multiple uses from same investment: e.g. staff education



ITTS hope to implement the use of video-consultations into a number of specialty areas, including:

- [Speech Therapy Services](#)
- [Remote Renal Services](#)
- [Emergency Psychiatry Services](#)
- [Remote Diabetes Services](#)

[Read more >>](#)

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## Spotlight on...Speech Therapy Project

Remote speech therapy services are established in Sweden, and have been demonstrated to work in Scotland. Through ITTS, these services will be extended, linking to patients' homes where possible. These services will be introduced or extended in participating partner countries.

An existing transnational network of speech therapists will expand across the Northern Periphery to deliver improved care and reduce unnecessary travel.



Using videoconference (VC) technology to deliver speech and language assessment and therapy remotely is not new, but the focus is now increasingly on widening its use.

### **Latest Project Activity:**

#### **Sweden**

Operating out of the Norrland's University Hospital in Umeå, VC is being promoted in the speech and language therapy (SLT) department, with systems being successfully deployed in patients' homes. This allows treatment to follow evidence-based best practice in the form of intense 4-times weekly sessions, which have been shown to improve outcomes – but can be difficult for patients to attend in person at the hospital.

SLT is also connecting with the ear, nose and throat (ENT) department to help head and neck cancer patients with rehabilitation following treatment. Together a SLT and ENT nurse will provide support and care to patients in this new VC service.

- 10 speech therapists are now involved in this project. This increase in staff will greatly reduce the burden on current staff.
- 4 portable VC units have now been ordered and the first patients have been recruited.

#### **Scotland**

The North Area of NHS Highland has used VC technology to deliver speech and language therapy (SLT) for 2 years. Extending across Caithness and Sutherland, this is a large geographical area with very few urban settlements. There are two SLT bases in the area, both located on the more populated east coast, and these can now be linked by VC. These bases can also link with other SLT services across the Highland region and, more recently (since January 2012), with four small health centres in the remote north and west.

The current aim is to maximise the use of existing VC units and help promote the clinical use of VC by other disciplines in order to develop an economically viable multi-professional clinical network of VC facilities. ITTS Scotland are looking at widening the clinical use of the VC equipment to other specialities such as pain management and midwifery.

#### **Ireland**

The clinical team is now recruited and remote sites identified, with the focus on connecting remote and island communities' care centres. Testing of the pilot service is now complete with early trials generating positive feedback from all involved.

Next steps will be recruitment and the purchase of equipment. The Irish team are also working on the improvement of broadband internet connections.

## Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, the focus will be on the rehabilitation of stroke patients using VC technology both at home and in local health centres.

In November 2012, a group of speech and language therapists from Northern Ireland are travelling to Scotland in a knowledge exchange exercise. In December 2012, a speech therapist from ITTS Sweden will also visit the team in Northern Ireland to provide further training and guidance.

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## Partner Focus: Finland

### Oulu Arc – Bringing Health Services Closer to the Community



Oulu Arc Joint Authority is a partnership comprising legal, health and social services for five municipalities in northern Finland: Ii, Pudasjärvi, Simo, Utajärvi, and Vaala.

The expansive region surrounding the city of Oulu is a sparsely populated area (28,000 inhabitants: 14,000 km<sup>2</sup>) making telemedicine one of the most important focus areas.

Oulu Arc is experienced in the use of videoconference technology to facilitate the delivery of medical care in primary healthcare centres. For example, teleconsultation for diabetes patients has been routine service since 2006. Oulu is also considered one of Europe's "living labs", where residents experiment with new technology (such as NFC tags and ubi-screens) at a community-wide scale.



There are about 1,000 employees working for Oulu Arc, most in the fields of health and social care. The remainder, about 70 people, work in financial management, human resources, ICT, business advice and administration services.

We are fortunate to have Oulu Arc as a Partner in ITTS, and we are looking forward to our next Partner Meeting which they are hosting in March 2013.



*Left to right: Petri Antilla, Tiina Vuononvirta, Anne Kaattari, Ritva Leinonen, Matti Matero*

[Read more >>](#)

## Recent Events

ITTS was represented at the following events:

- [1 November 2012: SCTT Annual Conference, Edinburgh](#)
- [5-6 November 2012: ICT for Health Final Conference, Brussels](#)
- [14-15 November: NPP Lead Partner Seminar & Annual Conference, Derry](#)
- [20-21 November 2012: P4 Digital Healthcare Convention, Inverness](#)

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