

Report

Telehealth standards development recognised by award

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NHS Connecting for Health's contribution to developing technologies, which enable patients to transmit healthcheck results seamlessly from home to their health professional and get real-time feedback on their condition, has been recognised in an award by the sector's global alliance.

The contribution of NHS CFH to developing standards in telehealth has been honoured through a 'Continua Health Alliance Key Contributor' Award.

George MacGinnis, who leads the Assistive Technology Programme (part of the NHS Connecting for Health Technology Office), received the personal award for his 'outstanding' contribution in shaping the next stage of Continua's work.

NHS CFH is a member of the Continua Health Alliance - an open organisation comprising of over 140 world leading organisations and involving over 1000 professionals working on Telehealth and Telecare.

These are services which enable delivery of health and social care direct to people's homes and involve equipments such as panic alarms, home-use medical devices as well as video-conferencing.

The Continua Health Alliance is working towards establishing a system of linked personal solutions to foster independence and empower people and organisations to better manage health and wellness.

Continua is committed to empowering consumers and patients world wide, to take an active role in their own care through the use of technology.

George was recognised with one of the Awards, given to only a handful of recipients each quarter, for outstanding results in defining and developing proposals for Continua's work reflecting a wide variety of perspectives and getting them ready for agreement by all the 140 organisations represented.

Through this work George also developed strong relations between the various groups within the Continua Health Alliance working on a variety of aspects including identity, privacy and the interface between clinical systems.

Joining NHS Connecting for Health in October 2005, George helped to set up the Assistive Technology Programme in 2006. This was established to take forward NHS Connecting for Health's involvement in supporting the development and procurement of Telehealth technologies and their integration into the NHS Care Records Service (NHS CRS).

As part of his work George has been involved with the NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency (PASA) in setting up the National Framework Agreement for Telecare and working with the Department of Health on the White Paper Whole System Long Term Condition Demonstrators Programme.

George said: "Telehealth is an important part of NHS Connecting for Health's work in helping to make healthcare more personal. It is essential that we can respond to the changing needs for patient information from personal health systems and ensure industry delivers solutions that the NHS can really use.

"Telehealth technology and equipment offers a wide range of tangible benefits to the NHS and to patients. An example of this is where healthcare professionals are able to support patients with long-term conditions, such as heart failure, by allowing patients to measure their vital signs at home and send the results back instantly and securely.

"This helps to identify potential issues early, prevent emergency admissions and offers patients a much higher quality of life as a result. This is the sort of technology envisaged in the 'Our health, our care, our say' white paper and is expected to play a significant role in meeting the Prime Minister's recent commitment to extending services for all 15 million people in England with long-term conditions."