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HOW IS THE DIGITIZATION OF INFORMATION IMPACTING UPON PATIENTS, STAFF AND MANAGERS ACROSS THE HEALTH SERVICE?

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01HRS WEDNESDAY 25TH APRIL 2007

In a survey of 200 patients and their representatives, clinicians and other healthcare professionals (librarians and IT staff) from across eight NHS trusts, Professor Ann Blandford and Professor Peter Lunt have looked at the growing need to understand how digitisation of health information will impact upon patients, staff and managers across the health service. The main body of research focused on experiences and perceptions of digital libraries (sources of non-personal health information). The second part of the research looked at the introduction of new technologies in particular healthcare contexts including patient information, patient booking and patient record systems.

Findings from the project, which was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council's E-Society Programme, show how technologies can be integrated into practice in different ways to that expected by those implementing and monitoring their use. This indicates that attention is required on areas such as:

- designing technologies to fit with established working practices at the individual and team level within the NHS
- ensuring that the values of workers are not at odds with the new technologies; ensuring that users trust the technology;
- ensuring that the new technologies do not undermine health service workers' pride in their knowledge.

"Technologies can empower users and support their working practices, facilitate effective communication and improve efficiency. However if the shift toward the digitisation of

health information is to result in improved performance and quality of life, then it is essential to understand the interrelationships between technology design and deployment and the roles and relationships of the users of that technology,” comments Ann Blandford.

A briefing has been prepared which highlights further findings from the research. This can be found on the e-Society website on the following link:

<http://www.york.ac.uk/res/e-society/projects/8/8briefingdoc.pdf>

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

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NOTES TO EDITOR:

1. The research "Co-Evolving Roles and Technologies in the NHS: Barrier and Forces for Change" was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). Ann Blandford works at the University College London, WC1E 7DP.
2. The research reported above is part of the “Co-Evolving Roles and Technologies in the NHS: Barrier and Forces for Changes” research project. A 4 page e-society briefing .pdf on the project can be downloaded from the e-society website <http://www.york.ac.uk/res/e-society/projects/8/8briefingdoc.pdf> or emailed to you on request.
3. The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) is the UK's largest funding agency for research and postgraduate training relating to social and economic issues. It supports independent, high quality research relevant to business, the public sector and voluntary organisations. The ESRC's planned total expenditure in 2007-08 is £181 million. At any one time the ESRC supports over 4,000 researchers and postgraduate students in academic institutions and research policy institutes. More at <http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk>
4. The ESRC E-Society Programme is the largest-ever academic research programme to investigate the impact of digital technologies, particularly the internet on society: <http://www.york.ac.uk/res/e-society/>