



\*\*\*Hi-res images can be supplied on request\*\*\*

## Press release

26 November 2014

### **Medical technology designers to face Dragons' Den judges for £10,000 innovation prize**

MEDICAL technology designers are to pitch a new contoured support snood helping to improve the quality of lives of motor neurone disease sufferers whose neck muscles have weakened to a panel of Dragons' Den style judges as part of a £10,000 innovation challenge.



A team of experts from the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) funded Devices for Dignity Healthcare Technology Co-operative have been singled out from hundreds of entries across the country to showcase the work as part of the NHS Innovation Challenge Prizes 'Acorn Challenge'.

The NHS Innovation Challenge Prizes is being run by NHS England and aims to recognise and reward small ideas that have the potential to make a big difference to patients.

The Sheffield support snood is a lightweight neck collar that sits along the contours of the patient's neck muscles, allowing patients' freedom to move their neck.

The unique design – which has been tested on 26 patients suffering with motor neurone disease – could be used for patients suffering with other devastating neurological conditions, such as stroke and trauma, and makes everyday tasks such as eating and speaking easier for patients whose quality of life is already severely impaired by debilitating illnesses.

The Sheffield support snood has been designed and developed thanks to a collaboration between the NIHR Devices for Dignity Healthcare Technology Co-operative, Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Sheffield.

Nicola Heron, programme manager for the NIHR Devices for Dignity Healthcare Technology Co-operative, said: “The Sheffield support snood was created in response to patients living with motor neurone disease and other neurological conditions who told us existing neck collars provide insufficient support or completely immobilise the neck, negatively impacting on the quality of their life.

“Although we cannot stop the disease itself from worsening, the collar has the potential to make life more comfortable for patients already suffering with a debilitating illness by alleviating pain and discomfort caused by weakened neck muscles.

“We're delighted that we've been given this fantastic opportunity to showcase the significant improvement in wellbeing our newly-designed collar offers. If successful we will use the prize money to manufacture a new batch of collars for patients with motor neurone disease, which can market in the UK and other big countries such as the USA. We are

also keen to explore if the product can be used to support patients with other neurological conditions.”

The team will present in front of the Dragons’ Den NHS Innovation Challenge Prizes judges on Wednesday 3 December. The judging panel will consist of leading figures from the NHS, industry and third sector.

Winners will be announced on or after Thursday 8 January 2015.

To find out more about the NHS Innovation Challenge Prizes visit [www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/innovation/challenge-prizes/](http://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/innovation/challenge-prizes/).

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Photo: Designers explain how the Sheffield support snood will help support weakened muscles to motor neurone disease sufferer Moya Briggs (seated) and husband John Briggs at last year’s Design4Health exhibition at Sheffield Hallam University

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**Notes to Editors**

**Devices for Dignity Healthcare Technology Co-Operative**

Established in 2008 as one of the two original pilot healthcare technology co-operatives set up the Department of Health, the Devices for Dignity Healthcare Technology Co-Operative (D4D) is now formally recognised by the National Institute for Health Research as one of eight specialist centres of expertise focused on developing new healthcare products which empower people with long-term debilitating conditions to live more dignified and independent lives.

Working collaboratively with NHS Trusts, universities, patients and industry, D4D has won over £12.8m in grant funding since it was established in 2008 to develop new medical devices concepts, healthcare technologies and technology-dependent interventions that improve treatment and quality of life for patients.

D4D is led by Professor Wendy Tindale OBE, who provides scientific leadership for one of the largest NHS centres of medical technology in the UK as Scientific Director at Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. Wendy was honoured with an OBE for Services to Healthcare in the 2014 New Year's Honours List.

D4D is hosted by Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

For further information visit: [www.devicesfordignity.org.uk/](http://www.devicesfordignity.org.uk/)

### **The National Institute for Health Research**

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) is funded by the Department of Health to improve the health and wealth of the nation through research. Since its establishment in April 2006, the NIHR has transformed research in the NHS. It has increased the volume of applied health research for the benefit of patients and the public, driven faster translation of basic science discoveries into tangible benefits for patients and the economy, and developed and supported the people who conduct and contribute to applied health research.

The NIHR plays a key role in the Government's strategy for economic growth, attracting investment by the life-sciences industries through its world-class infrastructure for health research. Together, the NIHR people, programmes, centres of excellence and systems represent the most integrated health research system in the world.

For further information, visit the NIHR website ([www.nihr.ac.uk](http://www.nihr.ac.uk)).

### **Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust**

Sheffield Teaching Hospitals is one of the UK's largest NHS Foundation Trusts and one of the largest and busiest teaching hospitals. We have over 15,000 staff caring for over a million patients each year at our five hospitals and in the local community:

- The Royal Hallamshire Hospital
- The Northern General Hospital
- Charles Clifford Dental Hospital
- Weston Park Cancer Hospital
- Jessop Wing Maternity Hospital

We offer a full range of local hospital and community health services for people in Sheffield as well as specialist hospital services to patients from further afield in our many specialist centres. The Trust is recognised internationally for its work in neurosciences, spinal injuries, renal, cancer, transplantation, neurosciences and orthopaedics.

The Trust has been awarded the title of 'Hospital Trust of the Year' in the Good Hospital Guide three times in five years and we are proud to be one of the top 20% of NHS Trusts for patient satisfaction.

The Trust is a recognised leader in medical research for bone, cardiac, neurosciences and long term conditions such as diabetes and lung disease. We also play a key role in the training and education of medical, nursing and dental students with our academic partners, including the University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam.

For more information visit: [www.sth.nhs.uk](http://www.sth.nhs.uk)