

PRESS RELEASE

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EU funds SPLENDID: High Tech Sensors Teach Children How to Eat and Be Active

A cure for obesity and eating disorders may be closer than you think. EU has tasked the SPLENDID group to develop a system providing personal behavioural guidance to children and young adults, aiming at helping them adopt healthier lifestyles. SPLENDID's goal, says Professor Anastasios Delopoulos, coordinator of SPLENDID, "is to identify individuals at risk of developing obesity or eating disorders and guide them towards healthy eating and physical activity, thus preventing the onset of food-related problems". The SPLENDID system will record and change behaviour, through immediate feedback. Professor Delopoulos continues: "Using high-tech sensors to record eating and physical activity across the day, the system will provide information to users and health-professionals, in order to change behaviour." Smartphone and web-based interphases will deliver real-time, report-based feedback, targeting risk behaviours, allowing users to engage in their daily activities without losing control.

The emergence of obesity is a major health concern, causing 2.8 million deaths among adults worldwide each year. According to the Reinhard Hönighaus, European Commissions, Head of Media Relations representing Germany "children should be the target of future interventions and efforts should focus on teaching healthier lifestyles that lead to lasting behavioral change". The occurrence of eating disorders is another important, unsolved health issue in European societies, affecting mostly young women. The behavioural patterns in obesity and eating disorders emerge early in life, and they need to be managed immediately, before they root too deep.

The two major risk factors for obesity and eating disorders are abnormal patterns of eating and physical activity. Says Dr Cecilia Bergh, clinical expert in the treatment of obesity and eating disorders, "While obese people eat too much and move too little, the reverse is true for those with eating disorders, such as anorexia; Both groups are similar in that they do not experience hunger and fullness normally". Innovative clinical interventions allow obese and eating disorder patients to normalize their eating and physical activity and maintain a healthy body weight using new technologies. The knowledge gained through scientific research and clinical experience will be applied to the general population, aiming at identifying and preventing unhealthy behaviours among the younger generations.

The SPLENDID consortium brings together outstanding expertise in neuroendocrinology, clinical practice, microelectronics, signal processing and personalised health management. In addition, the consortium includes the International Engelska skolan of Sweden with a long lasting interest in improving the health of their students. The European partners are from Greece, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

Contact:

Dr Cecilia Bergh, SPLENDID Dissemination Leader,
cecilia.bergh@mando.se
CEO, Mando Group AB
SWEDEN

Phone +46 (0)8 556 406 00

Prof Anastasios Delopoulos, SPLENDID Coordinator,
adelo@eng.auth.gr
Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering,
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
GREECE

Phone +30 2310 9 96272