

Galway consultant helps develop SPACER

SOCIAL DISTANCING APP HELPS KEEP US TWO METRES BACK

R ESEARCHERS at NUI Galway's Health Innovation via Engineering (HIVE) Lab, led by Professor Derek O'Keeffe, Professor of Medical Device Technology at NUI Galway and Consultant Physician, University Hospital Galway, have developed a new smartphone app to help with social distancing.

'SPACER – The Social Distancing App' aims to reduce the problem of person to person spacing by harnessing ubiquitous smartphone technology and a novel algorithm which uses the Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE) protocol, to alert hospital staff if they are less than 2m from each other via a vibration alarm. The system is currently being evaluated at Galway University Hospitals and will thereafter be available for the general public.

The SPACER app can be downloaded (iOS or Android) to a smartphone and vibrates when someone else with the Spacer App on their phone (or with Bluetooth enabled) is less than 2m for over one minute. If the SPACER app vibrates, then the person can either move further away from someone nearby or suspend the alarm for 10 minutes if it was not possible to move straight away, for example health care workers performing a clinical procedure.

"Implementing the two metre social distancing can be difficult to manage in busy work environments such as hospitals, and it is vital that frontline staff stay adequately distanced to ensure that they do not spread the virus between themselves. Unfortunately globally to date healthcare workers are the occupation that have made up the largest percentage of people affected by the COVID19



In the Acute Medical Unit at Galway University Hospitals, from left: Dr Lyle McVicker, Dr Jessica Heneghan, Dr Donal Rafferty, and Professor Derek O'Keeffe.

pandemic due to their clinical work and their working environment. Therefore we urgently need an active and dynamic solution to help this vulnerable cohort and the general public to maintain social distance," said Professor Derek O'Keeffe said.

"The approach to managing COVID19 with digital health solutions can be thought of like fire safety, our SPACER App is like fire prevention – trying to prevent people from staying in contact too close and for too long."

Dr Ramona McLoughlin, Clinical Director – Medicine Saolta Group and Gastroenterologist at Galway University Hospitals, added, "Maintaining social distancing is particularly challenging in health care settings, particularly a busy acute hospital like University Hospital Galway. The SPACER App will help staff be more aware of their

proximity to their colleagues and help them, where possible, maintain the 2m distance and help protect themselves, their colleagues and our patients."

The SPACER App is currently being used by doctors and nurses working in the Acute Medical Unit (AMU) of Galway University Hospitals.

Dr Colin Davenport, Acute Medical Unit Consultant at University Hospital Galway said: "Following distancing guidelines as much as possible is a vital part of controlling this pandemic. By making health care professionals aware of when they are getting too close to others around them the SPACER app has the potential to significantly reduce any spread of coronavirus amongst staff and patients, and ultimately to prevent more cases of COVID-19 emerging."

NISRP PROGRESSING DURING COVID-19

THE environment under COVID-19 is constantly evolving and it is not known when 'business as usual' operations will return. Despite this challenge, the NiSRP programme is committed to the deployment of SAP HR, Payroll and Time & Attendance capture, alongside NiSRP Self Service in HSE South East in 2020, according to NiSRP Programme Director Miriam Keegan.

"As a result of the COVID-19 outbreak the timeline of the programme has been extended and will 'go-live' later than planned. The revised 'go-live' date will take account of any COVID-19 restrictions prioritising what is best for the business. The programme has also implemented a new way of working with the adoption of 'Agile' business delivery principles and practices. This enables NiSRP to progress towards the defined goal of full delivery in HSE South East," she explained.

The NiSRP Self Service Helpdesk continues to provide support for all aspects of the system for staff where self-service is available.

NiSRP Self Service has launched some new features in the last few weeks including

- 'Carry Forward of Annual Leave' – enabling employees to submit annual leave request online to their manager
- 'Notification Emails for Managers' - reminds managers about any outstanding requests in 'My Inbox' that impact pay
- Travel Expenses, Annual Leave and Absence Reporting - this feature enables the employee and manager to view historic and future data on all claims that have been submitted.

Please log on to the NiSRP Support Hub to view tutorials, FAQs and other information on www.hse.ie/nisrpselfservice