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Med imaging possible using smartphones

ST. LOUIS, Apr 22, 2009-- U.S. engineers say they have created a USB-based ultrasound probe technology that enables a smart phone to become a medical imaging device.

The Washington University in St. Louis scientists, led by Associate Professor William Richard and researcher David Zar, said the technology makes commercial USB ultrasound probes compatible with Microsoft Windows mobile-based smartphones. That allows the use of smartphones for imaging kidneys, liver, bladder and eyes, prostate and uterine screenings and biopsies, as well as using vascular probes for imaging veins and arteries for starting IVs and central lines.

"You can carry around a probe and cell phone and image on the fly now," said Richard. "Imagine having these smart phones in ambulances and emergency rooms. On a larger scale, this kind of cell phone is a complete computer that runs Windows."

Zar said the vision is to train people in remote areas of the developing world on the basics of gathering data with the phones and sending the data to a centralized unit perhaps half a world away where specialists can analyze the images and make a diagnosis.

Zar presented the technology last week in Washington during the 2009 meeting of the **World Health Care Congress**.