

# *Federal Telemedicine* **NEWS**

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## **“Virtual Healthcare Assistant” Introduced in the U.S. at WHITC held in D.C.**

The “Virtual Healthcare Assistant” presented by Dr. Alberto Sanna for the first time in the U.S. at the 2nd World Healthcare Innovation Technology Conference in Washington D.C. helps to prevent illnesses and provides personalized healthcare. Dr. Sanna Project Manager for the European Personalized Information Platform for Life and Health Services (PIPS) said “PIPS acts as a “virtual assistant” by sending alerts, checking for interactions, choosing the right foods for diets, providing safe and personalized information based on specific needs, and communicates with the doctor electronically. The only equipment needed is a computer, a cell phone, and an internet connection.

For example Mario, a 56 year old retiree suffers from coronary heart disease. He likes to spend weekends at the beach enjoying good food and drinks with his friends. However, the doctors have told him to watch what he eats by avoiding fats and salts, watch his weight, limit alcohol, avoid smoking, and exercise each day.

The goal is to keep Mario healthy and active, and so PIPS outfitted with several wireless medical devices acts as his “virtual assistant” by sending Mario memos on his cell phone to tell him take his blood pressure, report his weight, and send any other data that the doctor needs. The data is reported, analyzed, and updated, and Mario using his PIPS card has access to all the data.

If there are any problems, Mario fills out a questionnaire on the computer and the information goes to his doctor. If PIPS notices that Mario has missed some tests, Mario can use a digital pen to fill in test results in his PIPS diary with the results transmitted automatically from the pen to the mobile and then to the computer. The doctor can then communicate with Mario and tell him how to deal with the problem.

To help his treatment even more, Mario purchased the PIPS-integrated medicine cabinet. When Mario identifies himself with his PIPS card, the system updates any changes in his daily medications. Upon withdrawal of the drug from the cabinet, PIPS checks to see if it was the right drug, if the drug was taken at the right time, the best way to take the medications, and reports changes.

The system can also help people decide if their eating habits are healthy. If an individual buying food uses the camera on their cell phone to photograph the barcode, and sends this information to PIPS, the product's nutritional value etc. will be compared with the individual's personal profile. Information is immediately given to the person as to whether the food will have side effects, or be problematic.

San Raffaele Institute is coordinating the PIPS project with 16 other European and international partners plus 150 people are working on the project including doctors, nutritionists, psychologists, and researchers from the health and information technology fields. In addition, there are about 50 people ranging from university professors, health institute directors and experts operating in the health sector consulting on the project.

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