

NUI Galway research to help elderly people lead independent lives

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5 February 2007: Technologies to help elderly people lead more independent lives are to be developed through research conducted by the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology (ICSG) at NUI Galway, which has been awarded a € 1.5 million grant from the Intel Corporation, with the support of the IDA.

The ICSG research will inform the design, application and usability of new technologies to enhance the quality of life and independence of older people as part of the newly launched Technology and Research for Independent Living (TRIL). TRIL is a virtual centre, established as part of Intel's European Health Research and Innovation Capacity. The project involves cross-collaboration among NUI Galway, UCD and Trinity College.

An ethnographic gerotechnology research team at the Centre will focus on the content and meaning of older people's lives, their need for new technologies and their experiences with that technology as part of a secure but independent home environment. The team will also examine older people's experiences of disability which will provide guidance and feedback to those designing and producing new technologies in relation to falls, cognitive function and social connectedness.

Welcoming the funding, Prof. Eamon O'Shea, Director of the ICSG said: "The TRIL initiative is an important development in the ongoing study of age and ageing at NUI Galway. The ethnographic research at ICSG will ensure that older people are at the heart of clinical and technological decision-making with respect to new technologies."

The ICSG team will unite the various engineering and design strands of TRIL through enhanced multidisciplinary information systems that link conceptualisation to application, with a personalised focus on the experiences of older people in their own homes.

The funding will allow the ICSG to expand its interests in technology and ageing, which along with the economics of ageing and rural ageing, represent the primary research themes of the Centre. It also builds on the existing expertise of the staff of the ICSG, helping to establish the group as an international centre of excellence in the realm of social ageing. In addition, the funding demonstrates the growing interest of the private sector in the area and the increasingly multidisciplinary approach taken in ageing research endeavours.

Further information on the work of the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology can be found at www.icsg.ie

