

PRESS RELEASE
KICK OFF MEETING of “SMILING” PROJECT

The European project SMILING (“Self Mobility Improvement in the elderly by counteracting falls-GA n. 215493), has begun its activity.

On Friday 25th of January, the SMILING Kick Off Meeting took place at INRCA building of Villa Gusso in Ancona (Italy), organized by INRCA as co-ordinator. At this Meeting 28 scientists participated from 11 research centers, universities and companies of 5 European countries, such as Italy, Switzerland, United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Slovakia and Israel.

Antonio Aprile and Fabrizia Lattanzio, respectively INRCA General Manager and Scientific Director, welcomed the partners and wished them success.

The main objective of the project, is to diminish age related impairments by interfering with mobility disability and improving carry-over into real life situations. Nowadays, mobility means freedom, flexibility and autonomy for all citizens, including older persons. But aging is characterized by functional changes in the sensory, neurological and musculoskeletal systems, affecting motor tasks including gait and postural balance.

It is important to underline that more than 50% of falls occur during some form of locomotion and the percentage increases in people older than 80 years. 90% of hip fractures result from falls and almost 60% of those who fell the previous year will fall again. Approximately 25% to 35% of people aged 65 years or older experience falls each year.

Elderly at risk of falling can be considered to be suffering from an involuntary motor behaviour that restricts their participation in society.

The new SMILING approach is intended to challenge the older people to solve motor problems in real time, by inducing variable environments which need active response and problem solving from the target population.

The SMILING solution, a wearable computer-controlled device, is aimed to implement a systemic solution to re-model training sessions used prevalently in fitness clubs or home environments to facilitate and ameliorate walking schemas.

SMILING will strongly contribute to a new organization of training and rehabilitation programs allowing the overcome of the limits of old traditional rehabilitation paradigms moving towards at the edge challenges in training and rehabilitation, keeping in account novel principles of neuro-rehabilitation and focusing on mobility enhancing.

The end-users needs will be assessed and they will participate to the all phases of the project. Special attention will be given to the acceptance and usability of new technology.

SMILING, a thirty months project, has been financed by the 7th Framework Programme of the European Commission, in objective ICT2007.7.1 "ICT and Ageing". It is co-ordinated by Fiorella Marcellini of Research Department of INRCA (Ancona-IT), supported for technological aspects by Maria Bulgheroni of ABACUS (Milano-IT) and for scientific aspects by Simona Barhaim of Step of Mind (Tel-Aviv -IL).

The partners of the project are the following ones: Istituto Nazionale Riposo Cura Anziani-INRCA (IT- co-ordinator), Ab.Acus (IT), Centre Hospitalier Universitarie Vaudois (CH), École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (CH), Stichting Imec-NL (NL), Mishan(IL), Step of Mind (IL), Geriatric Center Kosice (SK), Technical University of Kosice (SK), Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna (IT) and University of Strathclyde (UK).

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