

PRESS RELEASE

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Start-up for a successful cooperation

Glow, speak, vibrate – the interactive therapy ball “ichó” of the Duisburger startup ichó-systems is able to do all of this and even more – and while doing this it helps people suffering from dementia. Now, this young business is the first startup-partner of the Fraunhofer-inHaus-Center in Duisburg. The cooperation is a gain for everyone involved.

Memory disorders, performance loss and change of personality combined with fear, insecurity as well as a lack of orientation are the consequences of dementia, one of the biggest medical and societal challenges of our time. In Germany alone about 1.6 million people are affected by this disease. On the basis of personal experience with dementia in family environment and according to the motto “technology, well packed” Steffen Preuß, Eleftherios Efthimiadis and Mario Kascholke developed the interactive therapy ball *ichó*. Depending on how people interact with it the mobile system responds with glowing, vibrating or music – and hence trains motor activity and cognition of affected persons. “The users are being activated and all senses are addressed – this is how we reach people on an emotional level, in a playful manner”, explains manager Steffen Preuß. “The goal is to help affected people, as well as relatives and nursing staff to enable them access to one another again.”

On its further way *ichó*-systems, which has just been selected one of the most innovative startups in Europe, is supported by Fraunhofer-inHaus-Center in Duisburg. For Wolfgang Gröting, head of inHaus-Center, this partnership is a logical step: As an innovation and cooperation platform it is obvious that the cooperation with a startup is

Redaktion

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an absolute must – especially if it goes this well with our core topic connected healthcare. I am looking forward to support ichó and to find solutions against dementia together. It is a win-win-win situation: for ichó-systems, the society and for the inHaus-Center.” Also the founders are thrilled by this cooperation. “It is very cool, how open Fraunhofer is towards us and the kind of support we get. The inHaus-Center is the perfect place for us to develop”, this is what Steffen Preuß is convinced of. “We have the possibility to profit from an enormous technical know-how, as well as a network of industry, other institutes and also the university Duisburg-Essen, which is in immediate vicinity of the inHaus-Center. And equally the inHaus-Center can profit from our knowledge and our network that we already have built – overall it results an immense added value through the partnership.”

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The cooperation between Fraunhofer-inHaus-Center and ichó-systems is so far unique, because the Living Lab in the inHaus is used in common – therefore all involved hope for an intense and direct exchange. Wolfgang Gröting wishes for further startups to follow this example “We want to explore new horizons – and I am convinced that the cooperation with ichó will yield results. Therefore we are looking for further young businesses, which want to shape the future together with us.”

Since 2015 the three ichó-founders work together on solution approaches for people suffering from dementia and the development of their interactive therapy ball. The work on their prototype is now almost completed and in 2019 the ball should come onto the market for good. Further information about ichó can be found here www.icho-systems.de

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The Fraunhofer-inHaus-Center in Duisburg collaborates with several Fraunhofer Institutes and many economic partners on the development of innovative products and systems. The main theme has always been the human being and his needs. In the creative think tank innovative systems and products from the cooperative research and development work are being developed, tested and demonstrated in practical application labs.

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Pictures and Captions

The three founders of ichó-systems (from left to right) Steffen Preuß, Mario Kascholke, Eleftherios Efthimiadis and head of Fraunhofer-inHaus-Center, Wolfgang Gröting (in the right, with therapy ball "ichó" in his hands) are happy about the cooperation in the inHaus-Living-Lab.

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Partners on equal terms: ichó-systems and the Fraunhofer-inHaus-Center work together in the Living Lab on the future of dementia therapy (from left to right the three founders of ichó-systems: Eleftherios Efthimiadis (standing), Mario Kascholke, Steffen Preuß; head of Fraunhofer-inHaus-Center: Wolfgang Gröting)

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The glowing interactive therapy ball "ichó" in use for dementia patients.

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