Realraum Innovations Labor – Building up a strategic partnership for better medical care

Improving supply quality, relieving hospital staff and using subsidies more efficiently – those are the common goals of Helios university hospital Wuppertal and the Fraunhofer-inHaus-Center in Duisburg. In Realraum Innovations Labor both will be jointly working on solutions for better medical care. Also they support the interaction between science, society and economy as well as small and medium-sized enterprises. This project is just the starting point for further joint activities – and more partners can contribute to Realraum Innovations Labor in the future.

In Germany and Europe there is a growing need for medical research, but at the same time there are less and less subsidies. Therefore available resources have to be used as efficiently as possible. Consequently it is crucial to conduct research originating from concrete problems in application areas – only then the necessary developments for the solutions of these real problems can be realized in an efficient and sustainable way. This is where the joint project Realraum Innovations Labor of Helios university hospital Wuppertal and the Fraunhofer-inHaus-Center in Duisburg starts. The common goal: to achieve positive effects on the innovative patient care and the work routine in hospitals as well as to improve the economic possibilities.

Multidisciplinary research team
A multidisciplinary research team is employed to aid in achieving these goals. A special feature is that not only professors and experts from the different clinical, creative and technical professional groups, but also decision-makers from different levels are part of this team. The multidisciplinary research team highlights the problem precisely and develops superordinate roadmaps. The innovation methods are dynamic and allow for a framework and a defined goal, but maximum creativity on the way for all participating parties.

Helios university hospital contributes with enormous application know-how, lots of experience with innovative methods, research knowledge, a broad network as well as valuable information in the medical area and from a buyers’ perspective. The main focus of the clinical team is on the definition of requirements for the technology, the provision of economic forecasts and the support in the test phase. The Fraunhofer-inHaus-Center is providing a high expertise in the area of sensor technology and a profound technological know-how as well as sufficient space for first realizations in their innovation laboratories. Both parties support inventiveness and user orientation.

Problem solving for different thematic fields
The plan is to create a direct connection between the real space and the creative space in three thematic fields: Care for dementia patients, dealing with and reducing stress and
the reduction of infectious diseases. This connection is supposed to accelerate innovations and consequently strengthen the healthcare sector. The different topics are observed continuously. The first activities have been a submission of an application to the Alzheimer’s Society, two EU tenders have been granted and a third has been submitted as well. On the topic of detection of infectious diseases and stress reduction there are going to be concrete tenders for companies. Further proposals are planned.

Special infrastructure
Overall the cooperation in Realraum Innovations Labor provides an ideal combination of clinical routine in a real hospital and a realistic test environment in a recreated clinical environment. A good combination, thinks the director of the Fraunhofer-inHaus-Center, Wolfgang Gröting: “The inHaus-Center provides a secure environment for pilot productions, while the Helios university hospital offers the possibility to test further developed or already launched products in a real environment – with patients, nurses, doctors and relatives. We are happy to be working together to solve these problems and to improve medical care.”

All solutions in the framework of Realraum Innovations Labor are supposed to be developed with end users, because they can oftentimes conceptualize more efficient products themselves. “In the beginning of the development the user specifications have to be the focus. We want to avoid undesirable developments and accelerate an efficient innovation process that functions in practice.”, says Maren Geissler, department manager for research and development at Helios university hospital Wuppertal. To test the solution ideas quickly on usability, a program for research and development acceleration is planned through which testing of possibilities in a resource-saving way is accelerated. Also an early involvement of health insurance is planned to be able to take their requirements into account as well.

Innovative technologies as means to an end
“In the beginning of the development process it has to be tested which technologies can achieve the best results – only then can we develop and realize solutions in the short, medium and long term”, explains Wolfgang Gröting. The innovative technologies serve as means to an end. “We especially want to do meaningful things: to make the clinical process more efficient, to improve the appeal for employers and to showcase economic benefits. More particularly we want to contribute to a better care quality for patients in a regional, national and European context – that is above all and we have to be and want to be measured according to that. The methods and tools are just means to an end. In the end we want to achieve better health and the best care”, complements Maren Geissler.

Small and medium-sized enterprises
Besides the improvement of the situation for patients and care personnel, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are supposed to be supported as well – they should profit from these developments. That is why future buyers of innovations are involved early on into the definition of needs and the design of the developments. That is supposed to give more security to SMEs: “For SMEs innovation processes with an
investment into the development of new digital solutions are especially useful when they can be sure of a future customer group – that is what we want to offer”, says Maren Geissler.

When can you contact the Realraum Innovations Labor team:
You have developed a promising technology, but don’t know yet for which use case/for which application you can use it for?
You have developed an idea for a commercial product, but need further elaboration with future users?
You want to make your product idea marketable and appealing to buyers, but you’re lacking business models that are interesting to hospitals?
You want to develop, test, evaluate needs-oriented, not available solutions and make them available to a big market?
You want to combine your planned innovation with publicly funded projects, but need support or individual consultation in the selection of funding instruments or the application itself?
These are situations where Realraum Innovations Labor is supporting you competently and confidently.

Green light for better health
The cooperation between the Helios university hospital Wuppertal and the Fraunhofer-inHaus-Zentrum is just a starting point for Wolfgang Gröting: “We are starting something great and I’m sure that far more SMEs and other hospitals and institutes are going to support and enrich our work. We are glad about every further partner.”
The cooperation starts right now and is not time-limited. In a cooperation with Realraum Innovations Labor interested parties can contact Maren Geissler or Wolfgang Gröting.

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Pictures

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