

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **New language project to improve communication with patients**

A new €500,000 project will help medical staff to learn a European language and improve communication with patients.

Academics from the University of Wolverhampton have joined forces with partners from the NHS West Midlands Workforce Deanery and universities and healthcare services in Spain and Germany for the TELL-ME project.

The initiative will provide self-study material for English, Spanish and German which uses vocabulary specifically aimed at medics.

The two-year project was developed in response to a European Union priority to increase people's mobility around Europe, and the European Parliament is also discussing ways to enhance cross-border healthcare. With all the benefits of this mobility, it is important to maintain high quality medical treatment and ensure a high standard of doctor-patient communication.

Professor Ruslan Mitkov, Director of the Research Institute of Information and Language Processing (RIILP) at the University of Wolverhampton, said: "A breakdown in patient-medic communication can lead to aggravated health problems and increased healthcare costs, so it is critically important to minimise language barriers wherever possible.

"By focusing on three of the most spoken languages in Europe our project will help not only English, German and Spanish native speakers working in their home countries, but also medical professionals from countries such as Poland, Sweden or Bulgaria who wish to work in another EU country. In addition, it can have an influence outside the EU as citizens improving their English or Spanish skills could work in North and South America and Oceania, and non-EU patients visiting the EU are likely to be able to use one of these languages."

Dr Elizabeth Hughes, Regional Postgraduate Dean for the West Midlands, said:

"This is an extremely important project. It comes at a time when increasing importance is being placed on proficiency in communication skills in doctors whose first language is not English."

Funding for the project has come from the Leonardo da Vinci Multilateral Projects for Development of Innovation, which is part of the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme.

The University of Wolverhampton is co-ordinating the project with partners from NHS West Midlands Workforce Deanery; Universidad de Málaga, Spain; Universität des Saarlandes, Germany; Hospital Pascual, Spain and Universitätsmedizin Mannheim, Germany.

The package involves a range of products including work-related language exercises, self-assessment tools and an interactive dictionary of key vocabulary and concepts. These will be tested out on trainees by the medical partners and disseminated to key national medical policy makers.

The languages targeted by the project - English, Spanish and German - are among the five most spoken languages in Europe.

ENDS

For more information please contact Vickie Warren in the Media Relations Office on 01902 322736

Ref:

Date Issued:

Notes to editors

The University of Wolverhampton:

- The University of Wolverhampton has 23,000 students and 2,500 staff in the West Midlands and has global operations in India, Malaysia, China, Nigeria, Poland and Cyprus.
- We deliver the highest number of Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) activity in the UK. KTPs help companies to benefit from graduates working on a specific project with academic support.
- Our excellent teaching and learning provision, which spans sciences, creative and performing arts, education, business and management, health and wellbeing, engineering and technology, law and social sciences, ensures 90% of graduates find employment.
- Of the 11 subject areas entered in the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE 2008), eight had elements graded as world leading and all subjects had elements graded as internationally excellent.
- We have invested £110m in the last ten years on campus and student facilities, and have campuses in Wolverhampton, Walsall, Telford and Burton.

NHS Midlands and East:

- NHS West Midlands and its Workforce Deanery are part of the NHS Midlands and East cluster of SHAs comprising NHS East Midlands, NHS East of England and NHS West Midlands.
- The West Midlands Workforce Deanery is working to improve the quality of patient care by ensuring the supply of multi-professional clinical staff (doctors, dentists, nurses, allied health professionals) who are educated, trained and motivated to play their part in a first-class modern health service.

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

