

PRESS RELEASE



Blind Clinicians Could Return to Practice

Issue Date: 18 April 2007

The Royal National Institute for the Blind is teaming with IT provider Adastra Software to seek out visually impaired doctors and nurses who are interested in a return to professional duty. The plan is to interface Adastra's urgent care case management system with an aural utility called JAWS so that clinicians can manage patients requiring assessment over the telephone without necessarily being able to see the computer screen.

A pilot project based at the RNIB's Redhill Vocational College in Surrey has been tragically halted following the death in March of its pioneering student, Dr Nick Unsworth. Dr Unsworth was formerly a practicing GP in Surrey, but had to withdraw from general practice when his eyesight failed during 2005. His death leaves the development work in suspense, and with the RNIB planning to close its Redhill College in August there is the risk that the project will come to nothing.

Adastra Chief Executive Lynn Woods feels that there is still great potential for liberating clinicians whose careers have been cut short by loss of vision. "There is heavy emphasis in modern urgent care strategy on the definitive telephone assessment of patients seeking urgent intervention. This presents a great opportunity for visually-impaired clinicians to contribute".

Dr Unsworth's family is entirely supportive of his work being continued to the benefit of other clinicians whose eyesight prevents them from practicing in a face-to-face setting. His widow, Carole, hopes this work will provide a fitting tribute to Nick's inventiveness and determination. "There must be others like Nick whose careers have been interrupted in this way – I do hope the work he began can be concluded successfully".

The project trainer and assessor for the RNIB at Redhill is Andrew Farrell. "Nick was making great progress using his customised version of Adastra and it would be so sad not to build on his example."

Press Release Ends

CONTACT INFORMATION

For further information on Dr Nick Unsworth's work with the RNIB, or to express interest in participating in any subsequent programme, please contact Andrew Farrell on 01737 768935 or AFarrell@rnib-redhill.ac.uk

For further information on the clinical aspects of software capability and the aural interface, please contact Adastra's Medical Director, Dr Alex Yeates alex.yeates@adastra.com

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