

# Social Dimensions of Health Institute

## SEMINAR

### Providing adaptive health updates across the personal social network

**Wednesday 4th June 2014 at 3pm**

**Room 2G13, Dalhousie Building, University of Dundee**

The arrival of a new baby is usually an exciting event for parents. However, if the baby is very unwell and needs to receive medical attention, it is also a worrying time. Family and friends are likely to be concerned too, and want updates about the health of the baby and the wellbeing of the parents.

In this EPSRC-funded research, we investigated what information parents were willing to share, and how they adapted this information to individual members of their personal social network. Fieldwork was conducted with parents whose sick, new-born babies were being cared for in a Neonatal Unit (NNU) in a large hospital, and with parents with previous experience of having a baby in NNU.

We found that parents adapted the information that they shared about themselves and their babies based on how close they were emotionally to members of their network. Parents gave most detail to those who were emotionally closest to them, and least to those who were less close.

Parents also adapted information content to each network member's tendency to worry and empathize. They varied the information provided in two ways: by not telling the full story or the whole truth, and by giving empathetic members of the social network more information than others.

Using this understanding, we developed a prototype software tool that created messages containing summaries of large volumes of complex medical data about the baby, plus information about the parents and the hospital. The tool automatically adapted these messages to individual members of parents' social networks. Parents whose babies were currently in NNU tried out the tool, and found it both useful and easy to use.

We believe that these findings can be generalized to the automatic adaptation of information content across the social network in other sensitive contexts, notably when users are chronically or critically ill.

Full details of this study are available in the following open access journal paper:

Moncur, W., Masthoff, J., Reiter, E., Freer, Y., & Nguyen, H. (2014). Providing Adaptive Health Updates across the Personal Social Network. *Human-Computer Interaction*, 29(3), 256-309.

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Dr Wendy Moncur

Dr Wendy Moncur (<http://wendymoncur.com/>) is a Reader in Socio-Digital Interaction at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, University of Dundee. She is also a Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Death and Society (Department of Social and Policy Sciences, University of Bath), and a Key Technology Partner Visiting Fellow at the University of Technology Sydney, Australia.

Intrinsically interdisciplinary, Wendy's research program focuses on the design of technology to support being human in a Digital Age. Grounded in Computing, her research draws on insights from many other fields, including anthropology, psychology and literature.

Wendy is Principal Investigator on the EPSRC-funded *Charting the Digital Lifespan* (<http://www.digitallifespan.org/wordpress/>), which unites internationally leading researchers at five UK institutions across the social and computer sciences. The research program investigates the parallels between the digital and physical lifespans through ethnographic and design studies, facilitated through novel social data mining technology. Concurrently, Wendy holds an EPSRC Post-Doctoral Fellowship (Cross Disciplinary Interfaces) for *Digital Inheritance*. This research explores the bequest, inheritance and repurposing of personal data in the context of the death of technology users.

Wendy has presented her work to the public at a range of venues, including the Edinburgh Turing Festival 2012, the Cheltenham Literature Festival 2013 and the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

**For catering purposes, if you  
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