



British Association Medal Award



Prof De Wet Swanepoel

Using technology and connectivity to fight a silent epidemic

On: Wednesday, 18 May 2016

At: 17h45 for 18h00

Venue: Sci-Enza, Main Campus, University of Pretoria

(Note: The Prospect Street entrance is open until 18:00, however the Lynnwood Road or Lunnon Road entrances will be open much later. See <http://s2a3.up.ac.za/directions.php> for directions and a map.)

Permanent disabling hearing loss affects more than 360 million people globally, of which 3 million are South African. It is a silent and invisible epidemic associated with various consequences, including academic failure, higher unemployment rates, poor health, social isolation, depression, dementia and increased mortality. More than 80% of those affected reside in developing countries and despite most losses being preventable or treatable the overwhelming majority of people do not have access to care. Novel solutions, capitalizing on advances in technology and connectivity, demonstrate promise as a way to increase access to care. The penetration and ubiquity of mobile phones, even in developing countries, make mHealth a powerful tool for widespread access. Our research initiatives have developed and validated smartphone-based hearing testing at a fraction of current costs, operated by laypersons towards early detection of hearing loss in children and adults at grassroots levels within communities. The award-winning patented hearScreen™ solution has brought point-of-care diagnostics from specialized centres to communities and homes with cloud-based data management linking patients to services. Taking this one step further, diagnosis of ear disease using our smartphone-based video-otoscopy solution coupled with a powerful image-analysis algorithm demonstrates accuracy for automated diagnosis on par with doctors. Decentralizing ear and hearing health care in this way will impact the overwhelming burden current health care systems experience and ensures the benefit of early hearing loss detection are realised whilst the negative impact is minimized and even negated.

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Please RSVP by 16 May to rsvp@s2a3.org.za

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