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New software to detect overdose risk among drug users

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A new e-health tool that could help reduce the number of drug-related deaths in Europe will be launched in Brussels today.

The tool, developed by the Orion Project, financed by the European Commission and led by the University of St Andrews, is the first risk assessment tool of its kind. If rolled out successfully, researchers say the tool could help to significantly reduce cases of drug overdose.

Gerald Humphris, Professor of Health Psychology at St Andrews - one of the 4 European research groups involved in the research - said in advance of the launch, "Drug use is one of the major causes of health problems and mortality among young people in Europe and this is a concern for the medical community and regulators alike; this is why we were keen to develop a new tool to detect and raise awareness of the risks of drug overdose.

"The findings from our tests have shown that 45% of patients would consider changing their drug taking behaviour as a result of using the software."

The software is designed to help both patients and medical professionals identify key factors that lead to fatal overdoses.

Ms Antigoni Papadopoulou, Member of the European Parliament for Cyprus and convenor of the launch said. "Over the last decade, Europe has experienced about one overdose death every hour. Europe needs to

support more tools and projects like this one that will help policy makers to understand how to prevent and reduce drug demand, particularly among the younger generations."

Representatives from EU Member States are meeting at the European Parliament to discuss a draft of the EU's drug strategy for 2013-2020. The strategy aims to contribute to a reduction in drug demand use and drug supply within the EU, as well as the health and social risks and harms caused by illicit drugs. The framework of this strategy will serve as basis for two consecutive 4 year EU Drugs Action plans.

More information: orion-euproject.com/

Provided by University of St Andrews

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