

ATU and Riada Care Ltd. Launch Innovative VR Project to Enhance Elderly Resident Well-Being

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Atlantic Technological University (ATU) and Riada Care Ltd. have announced the successful launch of a pioneering project utilizing Virtual Reality (VR) technology to significantly improve the quality of life for elderly residents in residential care facilities. Supported by the Data2Sustain European Digital Innovation Hub (EDIH), this initiative introduces immersive 360° VR experiences designed to evoke cherished memories and foster emotional connections.

The project enables family members, carers, and staff to create personalized 360° videos, which residents can experience using Meta Quest 3 VR headsets. These immersive experiences allow residents to virtually revisit meaningful locations and moments, such as scenic coastal walks or familiar family settings.

“Our 12-week pilot at Hillcrest and Archview care homes in Letterkenny demonstrated the profound impact of 360° immersive videos on residents,” stated Luke Gavigan, Director of Riada Care Ltd. “This initiative empowers both staff and families to create personalized VR content, bringing cherished outdoor experiences indoors.”

Dr. William Farrelly of WiSAR Lab, ATU Donegal, and Project Lead, highlighted the transformative potential of the collaboration. “The overwhelmingly positive feedback from the initial trials underscores the power of VR to combat isolation and enhance emotional well-being in elder care,” he said.

The project includes a comprehensive training program with instructional videos, equipping carers and family members to create and edit 360° video content. Care home staff have also received Meta Quest 3 VR headsets, Insta360 cameras, and editing software to expand the VR content library.

Dr. Stephen Seawright, Technology Gateway Manager at ATU Donegal, emphasized the collaborative success of the project. “This initiative exemplifies the effective partnership between academia, healthcare providers, and funding bodies like Data2Sustain EDIH, showcasing the potential of emerging technologies in healthcare,” he noted.

The project aims to expand to additional Riada Care facilities across Ireland, conduct further research on long-term benefits, and explore new VR applications, including guided relaxation and physical therapy. “Immersive technologies have the potential to transform physical and psychological outcomes in social care settings,” concluded Dr. Farrelly. “This integration enriches residents’ lives and empowers carers to provide innovative, personalized support.”