CASE STUDY

Hermes Fellowship funds ‘Do you know your food’ app for allergy sufferers

Almost every day the press reports on how the unprecedented use of highly processed food has exacerbated the proportion of individuals who now suffer from food allergies. Despite this, there exists no evidence-based mobile app on the market that would allow users to identify food products they would do best to avoid.

Dr Franco Falcone and Dr Marcos Alcocer applied for HERMES funding to develop a health app that allowed allergy sufferers to identify their specific allergens in food products. With initial interest from supermarkets and charities active in the Allergy area, Dr Falcone and Dr Alcocer started working with a Nottingham based developer to complete the allergy app prototype.

The app was soon rebranded to ‘KnowURFood’, a change that reflected an increased demand for products that were identifiably vegan or gluten free whilst also allowing the user to simply input their preferred tastes.

Once the user has stated their allergies/ preferences, the app uses a barcode scanner to cross-reference every declared ingredient in the product against a professional database of allergens, before issuing a warning to the user. In addition to this, the app acts as a diagnosis-supporting device by suggesting possible cross-reactions that the individual may not yet be aware of.

To make KnowURFood the first medically approved health app for individuals with allergies and special dietary requirements, Dr Falcone and Alcocer are currently searching for further funding to improve the sensitivity and specificity of the application, implement some cutting-edge semantic algorithms and refine the prediction of potential cross-reactivity; at which point they can apply to the appropriate regulatory bodies.