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THE LATEST GADGETS AND GIZMOS THAT COULD REPLACE CONSULTATIONS WITH MEDICS

iDoctor will see you now

STRUGGLING to get a GP appointment? Don't despair. Technological advances mean

consultations with real doctors and nurses could become a thing of the past. Here,

DIANA APPELYARD reveals futuristic inventions that may one day render medics obsolete.

SKIN

A TINY cube-shaped gadget called Oku, which sits behind the ear, scans and analyses your skin, providing up-to-date information on conditions and outbreaks.



It can detect the moisture content of skin, enabling you to ease problems and conditions. Oku will be available in Europe next year for around £200.

SURGERY

ROBOTS have moved into operating theatres, with the Da Vinci surgical system carrying out thousands of operations.



This advanced robot cuts and manipulates tissue in the same way as a surgeon would, but does it through a tiny hole and with far greater accuracy, reducing pain and blood loss and minimising the patient's hospital stay and recovery time.

CANCER SCREENING

A GLOVE has been developed in the US which could aid cancer diagnosis.

The MedSensation Tricorder Glove, which contains sensors that detect vibration, sound and temperature, features a buzzer system which alerts the user when it comes across anything that requires some investigation.

The glove could be particularly useful in diagnosing problems in hard-to-reach areas such as the prostate.



HEART

ELECTRONICS company Philips has devised a wearable sensor which monitors a patient's heart rate.

The device, which was co-developed by researchers at Radboud University in Holland, also tracks the wearer's lung function and activity levels, and all the data is uploaded to a cloud-based storage system. It is hoped it could aid people with serious medical problems such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.



PANCREAS

MONITORING blood glucose levels is a vital daily routine for diabetics and a new meter called Dario automatically logs and tracks a sufferer's levels on a smartphone app.

It means you can keep track of your sugar levels, store the results and take insulin when needed.

A wearable artificial pancreas, which pumps the required amount of insulin into the blood, should also be available in about two years' time.



EYES

VIBRATING shoes that link to your phone have been developed to help the visually impaired to navigate. Lechal, which comes as shoes or insoles, guides the wearer through vibrations and links with Google Maps to provide navigation information, with a connected app which tracks the wearer's activity. It will be launched in the UK next month.

Zoomable contact lenses are also being developed. Wearers will be able to control the magnifying action up to 2.8 times by blinking, using mirrors.



MENTAL HEALTH

SEASONAL affective disorder, or SAD, is thought by some experts to be caused by low levels of daylight associated with winter.

But now therapeutic glasses called Luminette have been developed which are said to reduce SAD symptoms by exposing the eyes to a specific intensity and visible spectrum of light.

This light stops the secretion of melatonin, the sleep hormone, so Luminette wearers regain energy and alertness.



TEMPERATURE



YOUR temperature can now be taken using an infrared beam with a gadget called ThermoFlash, which is simply pointed at the patient's temple.

Because it makes no physical contact, it is being used on patients at risk of Ebola and can be used on children without waking them.

It will also memorise the last 32 readings to help monitor a patient.

BRAIN

FINDING it hard to concentrate? A new device called Forbrain promises to help you stay focused by blocking environmental noise.

It consists of a headset that re-routes the sound of the wearer's voice through their facial bone structure, leaving the ears free to process external sound.

It could help those who struggle to focus or get to grips with reading and writing.



PAIN

A NEW device called Quell wraps around the leg to provide wearable, drug-free pain relief. It works by stimulating the nerves in the leg to block pain signals to the brain.

Quell uses Bluetooth to connect to an app which tracks pain relief therapy and monitors the user's sleep quality, so can give pain relief as you sleep. It will be available later this year.



BREATHING

SCIENTISTS at Utah University have demonstrated how motion-detecting technology could be used to remotely monitor breathing patterns as the patient's chest rises and falls with each breath.

It could help people suffering from sleep apnoea, a condition characterised by erratic breathing during sleep.

