

EU: PONTE platform prototype to be released soon

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A prototype of the 'Efficient Patient Recruitment for Innovative Clinical Trials of Existing Drugs to other Indications' platform (PONTE platform) will be released this month (April 2012). The wider research community will thus have the opportunity to test run and review the tools that the platform will offer.

PONTE is a European project intended to establish a platform to help new uses for existing drugs. It will offer vital assistance throughout each stage of the process - from the moment an idea is generated through to the selection of suitable volunteers for the trial.

Once work on refining and perfecting the system is complete, PONTE will act as a one-stop search, query and decision support tool. By linking to existing medical knowledge databases, it will give near-instant access to information about any disease, drug or drug properties. This will aid researchers as they develop their hypotheses for new applications for existing medicines. If, for example, there is the possibility that a particular drug for high blood pressure may be useful in treating arthritis, PONTE will help to uncover it. The platform will then utilise data stored by individual hospitals to establish whether sufficient patients meet the criteria for a trial to be able to proceed. PONTE can select pre-consenting volunteers immediately - ensuring the right people for the right trial at the right time. To complete the jigsaw, the system will provide a step-by-step guide for setting up clinical protocol, in turn ensuring all aspects have been completed well in advance of the start of the trial.

PONTE will simplify the whole clinical trials process so that it will be easier to come up with the right concept and select the right patients. As well as saving money, this will give the public quicker access to drugs which may be able to help them. The platform is expected to be launched in a year's time.

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