

# Robot designed to support people with dementia

A robot designed to support people with dementia will make an appearance at an event for Galway primary school students later this month.

The Health Research Board – Trials Methodology Research Network (HRB-TMRN), based in NUI Galway, will host the Schools Teaching Awareness of Randomised Trials (START) competition on Friday, 19 May.

As part of this event, students will be given the opportunity to meet MARIO, a companion robot designed to support people with dementia mitigate the effects of loneliness and isolation, and view a demonstration of his various abilities, including playing music and reading the news.

The START competition, now in its second year, invites 4th, 5th and 6th class students and their teachers to design, carry out and evaluate their very own clinical trial. Participation in this competition meets several key aspects of the school curriculum including Maths, Science, English, Irish, Information Communication



**The robot MARIO.**

Technology and Social, Personal and Health Education.

The MARIO project aims to manage active and healthy ageing through the use of caring service robots. It is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme.

Many people with dementia live meaningful lives and retain many abilities if a supportive psycho-social environment exists. MARIO aims to support people with dementia through companionship, stimulating social engagement and social connectedness and prompting older people with dementia to engage in meaningful activities. This is achieved through

interactions through the use of speech and touch-screen technology. Through these interactions MARIO enables people with dementia to read their favourite newspapers, listen to their favourite songs, provide reminders of upcoming events, and connect with their friends and families.

MARIO is undergoing pilot testing in Ireland, England, and Italy, where he is interacting with people with dementia in hospitals, community nursing homes, and residential care settings.

Speaking about the MARIO project, Professor Dymphna Casey from the School of Nursing and Midwifery at NUI Galway, said: "MARIO has evolved over the last 12 months with the input of people with dementia who have actively engaged with us to help him become a suitable companion robot for people with dementia, and we are thrilled to now give students the opportunity to meet and get up close and personal with MARIO!"

For further information visit [www.mario-project.eu](http://www.mario-project.eu)