

Budapest, March 15, 2013



***An innovative system for the simultaneous acquisition of images deriving from SPECT and MRI: the European-funded project INSERT started its activities***

The INSERT research project (acronym of its full title “Development of an integrated SPECT/MRI system for enhanced stratification of brain tumour patients prior to patient-specific radio-chemo therapy and early assessment of treatment efficacy”) officially started on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013, thanks to the financial contribution received by the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Commission (for a total estimated amount of 4.600.000 €) for a duration of 4 years.

The consortium comprises 10 organisations, including both research organisations and private companies from five European countries and is coordinated by Prof Carlo Fiorini from the Department of Electronics, Information and Bioengineering of the Polytechnic of Milan.

The first project meeting was held in Milan (Italy) on 5th and 6th of March, in order to define the operative plans of initial activities and to open a debate on the requirements of the system to be developed.

The objective of the INSERT project is in fact to develop an innovative system combining SPECT (Single Photon Emission Computed Tomography) and MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging), which will enable the simultaneous acquisition of images resulting from the two systems.

The motivation of the INSERT project lays in the high mortality rate of patients with glioma (a tumour of the central nervous system). Unfortunately, notwithstanding the innovations brought by the scientific research, the management of these patients, as both adults and in the paediatric age range, is still a challenge. Life expectancy of these patients is very low and surgery does not represent a definitive solution in most cases, given the infiltrative nature of these tumours.

Thanks to the possibility of obtaining multiple parameters, the INSERT system will enable us to better define the tumour biology and to give relevant information to design personalized treatment, with a considerable impact on the efficacy of the treatment itself.

The system will be validated at the pre-clinical level using relevant animal models, and at the clinical level, during a pilot study which will involve patients with glioma.

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