Procedures for Volunteer Studies

PD-Net Study-Design Process Template

The PD-Net project will conduct a number of studies to explore how users interact with networked public display systems. In this document we describe our operating procedures for studies that feature volunteer users. All such studies will conform to the rules and procedures set out in this document. Further details can be found in the PD-Net Ethics Handbook, which summarizes the overall ethical approach taken in PD-Net.

## Definition of Volunteer Studies

Volunteer studies are useful for gathering quantitative information about a system, e.g., by testing aspects of a user interface or system performance in a controlled and usually simplified environment. Volunteer studies can also gather qualitative information about the attitudes and practices of prospective users, e.g., through in-depth interviews and surveys. Such studies involve a small set of specifically recruited participants and do not collect data from non-participants. Volunteer studies can be conducted in a range of locations including laboratories or public spaces but in all cases studies only involve active volunteers - no data is collected from non-participants.

## Nature of Studies

Volunteer studies in PD-Net may involve participants in interacting with networked public displays. For example, participants might be asked to play a simple game to test system responsiveness, post messages to a display to evaluate usability of data input devices or simply watch content and subsequently provide feedback on the suitability or quality of the content. They generally use widely available products such as smartphones and touch screens for interaction. Volunteer studies in PD-Net may also involve individual participants discussing a set of topics with one or more interviewers, or a larger number of participants filling out a questionnaire online or offline. The experimental procedure for the studies varies according to the nature of the research but will always be overseen by a local PI. PD-Net studies never involve activities that place volunteers at risk of bodily harm.

## Volunteers

Research participants will be recruited through local notice board, online ads, professional recruiters, or similar channels. Study subject will be recruited from healthy adult volunteers – no vulnerable participants (e.g., children or people with cognitive disorders) will be sought out or selected. All potential research participants will be informed about the rules protecting people who participate in research, in particular their right to withdrawal and the right to have their data deleted at any time during the study. Participants will be handed a brief description of the PD-Net project, as well as a comprehensive description of the planned study and their role in it. This document will also explicitly list the above rights and fully disclose possible detriments by participating in the study. While written consent is preferred, oral consent might be more appropriate in some situations, e.g., walk-up interviews on public places. Volunteers may be remunerated for their time and expenses, and may be incentivized to participate through small prizes/lotteries. However, there will not be excessive payments that may affect a study subject’s wish to withdrawal.

## Data

Data collection, storage, and use of personally identifiable information (PII) in PD-Net in general will follow the EU legal framework, as well as individual national legislation on data protection. See the *PD-Net Ethics Handbook* for details. As part of the individual consent form, study subjects will be notified of the data collected, the purpose of this data collection (i.e., the particular research aspect under investigation), the recipients of this data (i.e., only researchers involved in PD-Net), the name and full contact information of the PI responsible for the data collection, access information (i.e., how to get a copy of the data collected about oneself), and how long data will be retained.

At the latest, collected PII data will be deleted 3 months after PD-Net ends, though earlier times are possible. All publications will only use fully anonymized data, both when reporting qualitative and quantitative data. As the anonymization of demographic information depends highly on background knowledge such as knowing the recruited user base, the PI will ensure that reasonable efforts have been made to minimize chances of accidental data disclosure under such circumstances.

See also the *PD-Net Guide for Obtaining Informed Consent* for more details on the informed consent process.

All collected data will use *anonymous* *identifiers* for all participants, and store the data that links the participants’ identity to those identifiers separately from the collected data (“coded identification”). Data will be stored in accordance to the security principles described in the *PD-Net Guide to Secure Data Storage*.

## Documentation

As described in the PD-Net Ethics Handbook, details of each lab study will be recorded in a PD-Net ethics worksheet prior to the planned beginning of a study. See the handbook for details. Ethics worksheets will be part of the deliverable a particular study was performed for.