



Touching the Future Technology for Autism? (Ambient Intelligence and Smart Environments)

J. Mintz, M. Gyori, M. Aagaard

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International interest in the use of assistive and ambient information and communication technologies to support people with a range of cognitive impairments is growing rapidly. Autism spectrum disorders (ASDs), which affect social skills, communicative abilities and behavior, are of particular interest. The number of diagnosed cases has continued to grow in recent decades, and the impairments associated with ASDs mean individuals affected are at risk of social isolation and marginalization. Although helping people with autism to overcome their difficulties has always required the joint expertise of various fields, the widely shared view is that innovative ICT may hold the key to more efficient support and intervention in the near future. This book summarizes the results and conclusions of HANDS, an international research and development project supported by the 7th Framework Programme of the European Commission. The aim of the HANDS project was to develop and test a smartphone-based cognitive support system for intellectually able young people with ASDs, with a focus on use in secondary school environments. The results presented here include the HANDS system: a partly mobile, partly web-based cognitive support system based on principles of Persuasive Design; a unique multi-mode research methodology, applying both various quantitative and qualitative techniques to test the applicability and efficiency of the system; an exploration of relevant conceptual issues from the point of view of Persuasive Design and its philosophical foundations; a mapping of key ethical issues related to developing and applying mobile ICT for individuals with autism and other cognitive impairments. The experiences of teachers who implemented the system in school environments are also summarized. These results can be seen as snapshots of an evolutionary process, but the conclusions drawn here are significant for future developments with mobile assistive technology for people with ASD, as well as for other conditions. The book will be of interest to professionals working with young people with ASD, human-computer interaction professionals, as well as others working in the broader field of mobile assistive technology.

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