National Innovation Centre for Ageing

Partnership with Cambridge Consultants Drives Menopause Innovation

Cambridge Consultants is a world-class supplier of innovative product development engineering and technology consulting. Planning to make their first entry into the ageing market, they partnered with the UK’s National Innovation Centre for Ageing (NICA) to gather feedback on a new product concept for women experiencing the symptoms of menopause.

NICA worked with Open Lab at Newcastle University’s School of Computing Science to design and run a series of workshops, conducted in Newcastle and Cambridge, with three key aims:

• Understand the experiences women go through when they have hot flushes and night sweats
• Understand how women currently manage their symptoms
• Establish the opportunities for technology to help improve outcomes.

Approach
Leveraging their partnership with VOICE Global, NICA recruited a panel of 28 women experiencing menopausal hot flushes and night sweats to attend a series of workshop sessions.

The workshops aimed to generate feedback and ideas based on a product prototype – a cooling device in a wearable watch format – to understand what women might find useful in a product to help manage their symptoms.

In preparation, participants were asked to complete a diary recording their hot flushes and night sweats, as well as an initial questionnaire to build a picture of how their symptoms impacted their work, sleep and home life.

Outcomes
The workshops highlighted a strong demand for new, non-drug-based products to provide relief from hot flushes and night sweats. They also provided valuable feedback on Cambridge Consultants’ product prototype.

“I just used it (during a hot flush) and it was fab. Initially it didn’t work on the back of my neck (which was still sweating) but was great when I used it on my forehead and cheeks. I want one!”

The workshops confirmed that while cooling devices were a popular idea, the watch format was not what women would prefer. Instead, the attendees suggested a range of alternatives, particularly a bedside or desktop unit, which they felt would be more useful.

As well as identifying several additional product opportunities based on the prototype, the research generated a high level of interest and enquiries from press and consumers alike when it was published, further emphasising the demand for new products in this space.

Partnering with NICA gave Cambridge Consultants the insight they needed to confidently enter a new market, helping them understand the true scale of the business opportunity as well as identifying the product opportunities which would make the biggest difference to the lives of menopausal women.