

MEDIA RELEASE • COMMUNIQUE AUX MEDIAS • MEDIENMITTEILUNG**Novartis Pharmaceuticals launches the first app for visually impaired people for use with the Apple Watch and other smart watches**

- *New features of the ViaOpta apps, previously available for iPhone and Android™ mobile phones, are also available to enhance the daily lives of people with visual impairments*
- *These apps foster independence through step-by-step navigation and help facilitate recognition of everyday items such as money, colors, objects and people*
- *ViaOpta apps are currently offered in several languages including English, German, French, Spanish, Arabic, Japanese, Greek, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian and Hungarian*

Basel, June 30, 2015 – Novartis Pharmaceuticals announced the release of new features for its ViaOpta applications, and the extension for use with smart watches. The discreet, hands-free nature of using ViaOpta app with wearable devices, such as Apple Watch and Android Wear, provides users with an experience that seamlessly fits into their existing routines allowing those with visual impairments to navigate daily life with even greater ease. To see these applications in action, click [here](#) for a short video demonstration.

Real-World Patient Benefits

“With the help of ViaOpta apps, people with impaired vision can do things such as walk to a nearby café, go to the pharmacy, and pick up their grandchildren at the kindergarten – helping to increase confidence and independence and maintaining discretion,” explains Ian Banks, Chair, The European Forum Against Blindness (EFAB).

ViaOpta Nav is the first turn-by-turn navigation app available for a wearable device designed specifically for visually impaired people, providing voice guidance and vibration settings, which alert the user to upcoming intersections and landmarks. The users can ask for their exact position, add waypoints to a calculated route, and find nearby destinations or landmarks and save them as favorites. Users and their caretakers can also share and access a person’s exact location.

Cutting-Edge Technology

“Novartis is committed to providing innovative solutions which go beyond medicine, like these apps for the visually impaired which benefit their daily quality of life,” said David Epstein, Head of Pharma Division, Novartis Pharmaceuticals. “We are proud to contribute and play a role in making these simple and convenient tools like the ViaOpta Daily and ViaOpta Nav apps available around the world.”

Globally, more than 285 million people live with vision impairment and blindness¹. In order to reach as many of these people as possible, ViaOpta apps are now available in several languages with additional languages currently in development.

Highlights of Additional New Features for ViaOpta Apps:

ViaOpta Navigation:

- **Points of Interest Feature:** The user will now be able to see Points of Interest nearby, divided into categories, find information on them and set a navigation to a specific point of interest. This also includes information on specific accessibility facilities around them, such as tactile pavement and crossings, traffic lights with sound (provided that this information is available on OpenStreetMaps for the area which the user is in)
- **Extended Map Coverage:** The app coverage has been extended to the whole world, although coverage is less in rural areas

ViaOpta Daily:

- **New Object Recognizer Feature:** Identifies objects in the user's field of vision when user points the camera of the device at an object
- **Addition of Scene Recognizer Feature:** The user will be able to point the camera of the device at a desired direction or place and the voiceover will tell the user what is in front of them to help them navigate unfamiliar environments

Continuing a commitment to digital excellence

The smartphone versions of these patient apps won the prestigious European Excellence Award in 2014, the first year they were available. Downloaded over 6,700 times during the first two months after launch, these apps allow users to retain and in some case regain their independence and have been praised both for innovation and for real-life impact.

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About Novartis

Novartis provides innovative healthcare solutions that address the evolving needs of patients and societies. Headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, Novartis offers a diversified portfolio to best meet these needs: innovative medicines, eye care and cost-saving generic pharmaceuticals. Novartis is the only global company with leading positions in these areas. In 2014, the Group achieved net sales of USD 58.0 billion, while R&D throughout the Group amounted to approximately USD 9.9 billion (USD 9.6 billion excluding impairment and amortization charges). Novartis Group companies employ approximately 120,000 full-time-equivalent associates. Novartis products are available in more than 180 countries around the world. For more information, please visit <http://www.novartis.com>.

Novartis is on Twitter. Sign up to follow @Novartis at <http://twitter.com/novartis>.

Reference

1. International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB), *WHO Facts Blindness and Visual Impairment: Global Facts*. <http://www.iapb.org/vision-2020/global-facts> [Accessed June 1, 2015]

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