

媒体联络人：

范立鹏

易为公关

0088-010 85653791/17

William.fan@eastwei.com

杨丽莎 (Elizabeth Yang)

Palm, Inc.

0088-021 64734569

Elizabeth.yang@palm.com

Mt. Everest Climbers Reach New Heights: Conduct NASA-Sponsored Research Using Palm Tungsten T Handhelds

MILPITAS, Calif., June 6 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- Fifty years after Sir Edmund Hillary reached the summit of Mount Everest, climbers are achieving more than just getting to the top: they're conducting scientific research under the extreme conditions of the highest point on Earth. Since Hillary's legendary climb, more than 10,000 men and women have attempted to reach the summit, but none have conducted a study like what Brown University's Professor Philip Lieberman and his team of researchers completed last week using Palm(TM) Tungsten(TM) T handhelds to test the thinking abilities of climbers.

(Photo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20030606/SFF002>)

In his third consecutive year of his one-of-a-kind study, Lieberman, a professor of cognitive and linguistic sciences, and four research assistants studied the effect of the lack of oxygen -- a condition called hypoxia -- on Everest climbers' abilities to think clearly and understand the meaning of a sentence. Funded by the National Space Biomedical Research Institute (NSBRI), through NASA, the research has developed a method that can detect impaired decision-making ability by means of computer-implemented analysis of a person's speech. This will allow remote monitoring of crew members' performance in deep-space missions where exposure to cosmic rays could cause brain dysfunction similar to that resulting from hypoxia. The Everest research points to voice-monitoring techniques that could be used to alert people to life-threatening breakdowns in decision-making in other critical situations. The present technique developed by Lieberman and his colleagues already has proven useful in evaluating new methods for the treatment of Parkinson's Disease, in which similar, more extreme and permanent brain damage occurs.

This year's study reflects close cooperation between research groups at Brown and Harvard Universities through NSBRI projects. Harvard University Professor of Psychology Stephen Kosslyn and his research group developed and programmed the "Mini-Cog" cognitive test battery on the Palm handhelds in their NSBRI funded project. At Everest, voice samples were recorded on the Palm Tungsten T handhelds and transmitted with two additional tests performed using VHF radios to Lieberman's research team at Everest Base Camp. The Palm

handhelds allowed climber-subjects to self-administer a comprehensive series of tests that assessed their decision-making abilities under extreme situations.

"This is the first year we have used the Palm Tungsten T handhelds, and because of them, we were able to greatly expand our research by capturing more data," said Lieberman. "In past years, we relied solely on speech samples from VHF radios. We needed an unobtrusive, lightweight tool that the climbers could use to record voice memos and run the cognitive testing software. Palm's Tungsten T handheld was the perfect tool for both."

The results of the three-year study are expected to be published in the fall of this year.

和奔迈 Palm 有关的一些事实

- Palm 早期的领导者，至今仍然积极参与公司营运——Jeff Hawkins 协助制定 Palm 产品发展方向。Donna Dubinsky 仍为董事会成员之一。至于现任 Palm 的总裁兼行政总裁 Colligan 先生，更是公司的第二十位员工。
- Palm Pilot 万用记事本产品推出上市 18 个月，销售量就已突破 100 万台——市场接受速度远超过 IBM PC、Macintosh，甚至微波炉。
- 原创的 Pilot，是第一部可搭配 PC 使用的移动化装置，因此能让客户将信息同步化，随身携带。
- 第一部 Pilot 使用和标准交通号志类似的处理器，所以很省电，只要两个 AAA 电池就可操作（电力可维持 3 个月）。
- Palm 产品深入人们日常生活，不仅在百老汇剧场、好莱坞主流电影、真实电视剧、纽约客(New Yorker) 卡通当中，均可发现其踪影，同时更活跃于结婚喜宴场合之中。
- Palm 开辟出新天地，更创下多项业界第一的纪录——包括业界第一部整合无线技术，可收发电子邮件和上网的掌上电脑，以及第一部售价低于人民币 800 元 (US\$99)的彩色掌上电脑。

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