

## PROFILE

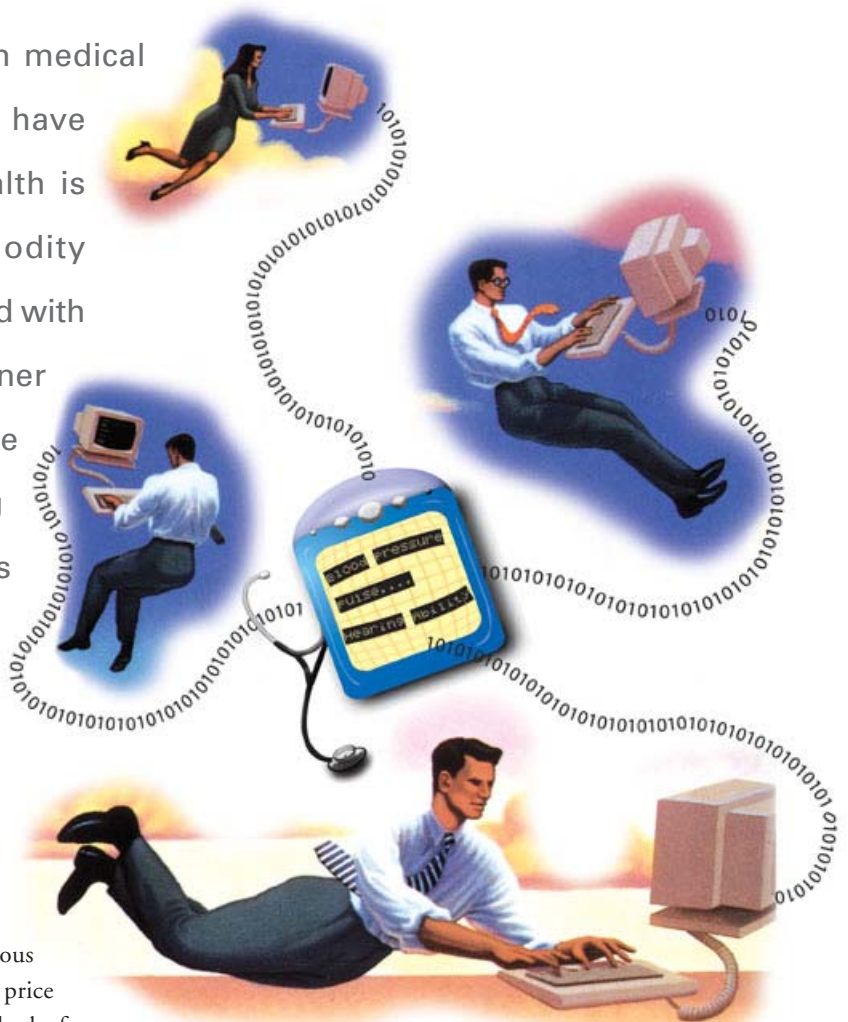
# Healthily in charge

As new discoveries are made in medical science, more and more people have begun to realise that good health is priceless. Such a rare commodity therefore should be complimented with first rate service at all times. Winner for Best of Health Solutions at the APICTA 2002, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Philips Medical System's School of Nursing have done just that...

As people become more health conscious today, there are no quibbles over the price for good health, but a certain standard of service from health practitioners is definitely expected. With such a demand for service, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Philips Medical System's School of Nursing decided that time was ripe for a better system of managing medical records. It came up with the award winning Telehealth System that won for the Best of Health Category in last year's Asia Pacific Information & Communication Technology Award (APICTA) 2002.

Developed in response to the Hong Kong government's call to strengthen primary healthcare and lifelong health record system, the concept of the System is simple, yet it is still able to cover a wide scope of features that helps ease the management of a person's health practice by allowing the person to take charge of one's own health.

Launched in April 2000, there are now more than 2,000 Hong Kong residents who subscribe to its services



that is provided by various components. One of it is the Integrated health Assessment Kiosk that captures physiological data on its client's blood pressure, pulse, electrocardiogram, hearing ability, heart sounds, breathing sounds, body mass index, images of the retina, eardrum and skin. The kiosk is equipped with the necessary equipment as well as instructions to direct the person inside the kiosk to assist it in taking such tests. No medical person is needed to assist in conducting these tests.

Another essential component that make up the System is the Booking and Enquiry Kiosk. This kiosk is designed to enable patients to make appointments with medical practitioners. With this innovative kiosk, medical practitioners are able to retrieve any of their client's health records before a scheduled meeting so that they can

familiarise themselves with the patient's medical history and be in a better position to treat and advise the patient. The checking of the records is also as simple as can be, at the touch of a button, without having to physically search through pile of medical records.

An interesting bit about the System is that it is also able to understand and compile input on its client's demography, health history, lifestyle and daily life. This feature allows medical practitioners to make better medical judgements as well as suggest proper lifestyle changes to the patient to improve his health.

Based on a very user friendly design, the System is easily accessible to all. Users get online to register and work their way from there, or they can also log on at any of the online kiosks located throughout the country. For those who have yet made the transition into cyberspace, registration can be done through a telephone call to the medical centre.

All medical records are maintained by a Virtual Centre which works as the archiving unit. Once a new patient registers with the System, all his records will be stored in the Virtual Centre. The records are updated when the patient provides new input and users can access their records anytime they require them as it available online. These records are also made available to the patients' medical practitioners.

When patients face a situation in which they need expert advice, the Telehealth Expert Station comes to the rescue. The Telehealth Expert Station, located at Hong Kong Polytechnic University, uses a T1 and a 512K video link broadband network, which hooks up the users to a nurse. This platform allows for real time consultation and eliminates the need for patients to visit a clinic. Instead, anyone with severe health symptoms can proceed directly to the hospital.

All entry logs are collected and deposited at the Health Statistics Centre that enables data to be analysed. Reports are then generated where the

data of all users are translated into statistics. This enables the Government and other authorities concerned to use the data collected to formulate health policies and create better and improved health services.

The public can also be informed on trends in healthcare especially in areas that are of particular interest or relevant to them. The information is designed to encourage users to take on the responsibility and play a more active role in achieving a healthier lifestyle.

Users are thus given the power and knowledge to make better and informed decisions about their health, instead of the traditional practice where patients are only given information on a need to know basis, as and when they see the medical practitioners. Users are also able to track their own health history and pinpoint changes in their health and check if it is related to particular incidents.

The System maximises the existing health facilities and helps to target problems in primary health services. Nurses are used in its implementation and this makes best use of their expertise and knowledge in playing an important role in the medical community. This award-

winning system has already proven itself to be one of the first steps towards encouraging the medical world to embrace technology with the recognition it has earned from the growing number of subscribers and awards it has won. Last year, it walked away with the Sigma Theta Tau International Honour Society of Nursing for the 2002 Pinnacle Awards as well as the

Information Technology Award for Clinical Nursing Applications.

A new wave in medical technology is upon us and will hopefully lead us to a more rewarding and healthier lifestyle! ●

*Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Philips Medical System's School of Nursing receiving the award for Best of Health Category at APICTA 2002.*

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