Satellite PDA Project - Uganda

Succes Strategy: The goal of the SATELLIFE PDA Project was to demonstrate the viability of handheld computers -- also called Personal Digital Assistants or PDAs -- for addressing the digital divide among health professionals working in Africa. Started for the first time at the end of 2001, the project uses affordable technologies to link health professionals in developing countries to each other and to reliable sources of information, including modem-to-modem telephone links and the internet by using geostationary satellites.

The organisers believe Information and communications technology (ICT) can play an important role in combating disease and improving healthcare. The project used ICT as a tool to collect community health information to support decision-making; improving doctors' access to current medical information; linking healthcare professionals so they could share information and knowledge; and enhancing health administration, remote diagnostics, and distribution of medical supplies.

The project explored questions related to the selection and design of appropriate, affordable technology and locally relevant content for use in African healthcare environment, specifically targeted at assessing the usefulness of the PDA for data collection and information dissemination. Physicians, medical officers, and medical students tested the PDA in the context of their daily work environments in order to gain a perspective on the real issues that affect the adoption of technology.

The PDA used was the Handspring Visor Neo, with a 33 MHz DragonBall VZ microprocessor from Motorola, a Palm operating system (Palm OS), and 8 MB of main memory. Pendragon Forms v3.1 was the software programme used to create the survey forms. Country-specific drug lists and treatment guidelines were obtained by Satellife in hard copy or electronic formats and adapted to a PDA-accessible format. Medical texts were obtained from Skyscape.
The Project was conducted in three phases. Satellife first put the handheld computers to use for field surveys, by linking this project to a widespread measles immunisation campaign being conducted in Ghana by the American Red Cross (ARC) in December 2001. The Satellife-Arc joint effort used 30 PDAs in a short-term survey intended to determine the efficacy of the measles immunisation campaign outreach efforts and collect some baseline health information. The Uganda phase tested the use and usefulness of 40 PDAs by medical practitioners to conduct an epidemiological survey on malaria, and to access and use medical reference tools and texts. The Kenya phase tested the use and usefulness of 40 PDAs by students to collect field survey information, and to access and use medical reference tools and texts as part of their studies.

This project was inspired and led by SATELLIFE, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organisation based in Massachusetts, USA. SATELLIFE's mission is to improve health in the world's poorest nations through the innovative use of ICT.

Target groups: Health professionals in Ghana, Uganda and Kenya

Partners: SATELLIFE, the American Red Cross; Makerere University Medical School in Kampala, Uganda; HealthNet Uganda; Moi University Faculty of Health Sciences in Eldoret, Kenya; and the Indiana University Kenya Program, Acumen Fund

Awards:
Tech Museum Laureate 2004
The Stockholm Challenge Winner 2002

Source: Briges.org and http://www.healthnet.org
For more information on our work using handheld computers to deliver health information to remote communities and to gather critical information for decision makers click here

Our Global Discussion Groups

Health issues people are talking about today...

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Health Development in Africa

RFI: Literature on the history of DDT usage (3)

**E-DRUG**
Essential drugs English

Number of clinical research projects at one time? (2)

**E-FARMACOS**
Essential drugs Spanish

Guía para destrucción de farmacos caducos (cot.)

**E-LEK**
Essential drugs Russian

generics’ market

**E-MED**
Essential drugs French

Questions sur les critères de préqualification de l’OMS pour les ARV

Mission: SATELLIFE leads a global partnership of health care institutions and health care workers, empowering them to communicate and share the health care information they need to treat millions of patients in the world’s poorest countries.

What we do: SATELLIFE’s unique strength lies in its ability to address this challenge through multiple approaches:

- By disseminating up-to-date, relevant information that enables good decision making.
- By deploying multiple technologies and building health care workers’ skills to utilize these technologies effectively.
- By creating local, regional, and global communities that share information and support each other.

These efforts span the globe, with over 100,000 individuals in 120 countries sharing knowledge and building healthier communities.
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