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Specialist centre in Alor Star to install Web-based telemedicine facility

Carolyn Hong

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - The Utara Specialist Centre in Alor Star will be the testbed for a Web-based telemedicine application.

In a month's time, two hospitals in London and one in California will be linked up with the centre, using software called Patient Information Folder developed by the Imperial College in London.

Its professor of biometrics, Dr Richard Kitney, who developed the programme, was at the Technology Park Malaysia at Bukit Jalil today to demonstrate the system to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The software was brought in by Software International Corporation, a company with Multimedia Super Corridor-status.

Its executive chairman Datuk Alex Lee said Dr Mahathir was introduced to the system when he visited Imperial College last June.

Kulim Technology Management, a joint venture between Kulim Technology Park Corporation and Universiti Sains Malaysia, is managing the project for SC.

Kulim Technology Management's group general manager Mazlee Md Ramli said the system would be installed and customised to local needs over the next three months, including training of doctors.

Initially, five departments in the hospital will utilise this system involving four doctors. The software costs US\$2,000 (RM7,200) per workstation.

Kitney said it would take a year to evaluate the full clinical trial of the system running simultaneously in Alor Star, London and California, forming a 24-hour medical network.

Doctors will be available round-the-clock from these three countries.

The hour-long demonstration today showed how a patient's medical records can be stored on this system, including X-rays, and retrieved by authorised doctors.

As it uses a standard Web browser, the information can be accessed anywhere in the world, using a normal computer and a regular telephone line or even a mobile phone.

"It gives healthcare professionals in remote areas instant access to top specialists in other parts of the country, without either party leaving their office and if necessary, direct access to international experts," Kitney said.

This can be done at minimum cost and patients who had previously to travel for specialist care can now be treated in their local environment. It also gives Malaysians access to the international market.

On the system's security, he said there would be measures like passwords, the use of Intranet, automatic dialback and data encryption.

Kulim Technology Management is also working with a local company to develop a smart card to give only authorised people access.

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