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Utara Specialist Centre chosen as telemedicine application site

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UTARA Specialist Centre in Alor Star, Kedah has been chosen as the testbed for an advanced electronic patient record system which forms part of the telemedicine flagship application in the Multimedia Super Corridor.

The system, the result of collaborative efforts of Software International Corp (M) Sdn Bhd, Imperial College London and University of Southern California, will be managed by Kulim Technology Management Sdn Bhd.

Prof Richard I. Kitney, head of the Department of Biological and Medical Systems at Imperial College London, said the pilot test will last for three months and during that period, Kulim Technology Management will monitor the system to see whether it is suitable for use in Malaysian hospitals.

"The web-based system (known as Patient Information Folder) is capable of handling a wide range of multimedia medical data and can run on any workstation such as Pentium, Macintosh and Unix," he told reporters in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, after giving a talk on "Healthcare Open Network Information Technology System".

The talk was attended by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Kitney said the system allows 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.

"Healthcare professionals in Malaysia can have direct access to leading specialists in other countries at minimum cost.

"This facility also allows the integration of the national healthcare community into international medicine. The benefit is that patients who previously travelled abroad for specialist care can now be treated within their local environment," he said.

The Patient Information Folder system also allows healthcare professionals in Malaysia to contribute directly to the international market.

"For example, participation in remote radiology is enabled as well as reporting on electrocardiogram and pathology slides which can be imported across the electronic network," he said.

For starters, Utara Specialist Centre will become the first site in the world to implement the system.

"We will implement similar systems at the University of Southern California Hospital in Los Angeles, and St Mary's Hospital and Hammersmith Hospital in London in the next one month," he said.

Meanwhile, Kulim Technology Management group general manager Mazlee Md Ramli said the company, together with Software International, is currently working on developing a smart card which will provide easier access to patients' health data through the system, but in a secure environment.

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