

Philippines expands wireless healthcare project

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Philippines expands wireless initiative to improve healthcare



Singapore: Philippines' Department of Health, Tarlac Provincial Health Office and US-based software company Qualcomm, through the Wireless Reach initiative, have expanded Wireless Access for Health (WAH) project, which uses 3G technology to improve healthcare in the Philippines. Local Tarlac government officials have committed to support the replication of the project across the entire province by the end of 2012.

WAH is made possible through the collaboration of public-private partners: agencies of the Philippines Department of Health, including the National Epidemiology Center, the Information Management Service and the Center for Health Development for Region 3; the Provincial Government of Tarlac; local Tarlac government units; Qualcomm's Wireless Reach initiative; RTI International; Smart Communications; Tarlac State University; the University of the Philippines Manila-National Telehealth Center; and the US Agency for International Development. (Read [Emerging nations turn to PPPs for healthcare](#))

The Philippine Field Health Service Information System (FHSIS) is the government's primary method for managing public health data and is used for policy analysis and planning at all levels of the public health system. Traditionally, information has been manually recorded on paper by health care providers, a time consuming and error prone process that is difficult to access and manage. The WAH project streamlines the reporting process and improves access to accurate and timely patient information for clinicians and decision makers by utilizing 3G wireless technology, building upon and strengthening the existing Community Health Information Tracking System (CHITS), an electronic medical records system developed by the University of the Philippines, Manila.

Since the project began in July 2009, WAH partners have established CHITS as their own electronic medical record (EMR) platform and successfully expanded implementation from four rural health units to 21 health clinics in the Tarlac Province, serving more than 1,500 patients a day. As of April 2012, more than 109,000 patient consultations have been captured by the system, resulting in improved patient and increased number of patient visits as a result of efficiencies that have reduced the four to five minutes needed to search paper records to just seconds. Due to the success of the pilot project, the Tarlac Provincial government has committed staffing and financial resources to replicate the project in all 38 health provincial clinics, which will make Tarlac the first and only province in the Philippines to have all of its health clinics interconnected and

running on a health information system.

"Wireless Access for Health empowers local health care providers through enhanced patient care services and efficient patient visits using an open-source health information system. It empowers local communities by promoting participatory health planning among local leaders, health managers and providers, thereby transforming clients and patients into partners," said Crispinita Valdez, director of the Department of Health Information Management System Division.

The expansion of the WAH project also includes province-wide pilot testing of the Mobile Midwife and SPASMS (Synchronized Patient Alert via SMS) applications. Mobile Midwife enables data to be captured electronically during patient visits via smartphones, tablets or laptops and instantly sends patient data to the CHITS system. SPASMS is an automated alert and health promotions system that sends patients information related to important health milestones such as for prenatal care and child immunization. To date, 26 midwives are participating in the Mobile Midwife program and 1,100 SPASMS have been sent to more than 250 patients.