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Telemedicine efforts, remote monitoring in expo spotlight

By JOHN BROSKY

Medical Device Daily Contributing Writer

PARIS — The accent was on telemedicine in the Innovation Center of the general practice expo, MEDEC, held here last week.

As elsewhere in Europe, hospital capacity is challenged in France, yet the promotion of prevention and pre-emptive intervention is a fairly recent development at the national level. Telemedicine constitutes an essential first-response tool, enabled by a robust telecommunications network that shifts the information infrastructure off a reliance on hospital-based IT to the established protocols for GSM and IP.

Telecommunications operator **Orange Internet Santé** (Health Internet), a unit of **France Telecom** (Paris), shared a co-branded promotion with two manufacturers of products recently launched in France, a geo-positioning bracelet from **Medical Mobile**, the French subsidiary of **Medical Intelligence** (Quebec City) for reporting the

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whereabouts of Alzheimer's patients, and a hand-held, web-based log for diabetes patients from **Voluntis** (Paris).

Medical Mobile said more than 2,500 of the company's Columba bracelets for Alzheimer's patients have been sold since September, when the kit became available in pharmacies, as well as boutiques of France Telecom and Orange (more on the Medical Mobile product in Wednesday's Part 2 report).

Orange Internet Santé has stolen the march on software providers in offering a secured network for almost 100,000 subscribing healthcare providers to transfer files and e-mails. Significantly, general practitioners and clinics in France are comfortable with GSM transmissions thanks to the national health smart card, Carte Vitale 1.4, and the terminals on every doctor's desktop that transmit patient information for both payment and reimbursement.

Another product linked with Orange is the insulin monitoring program from Voluntis, which is based on its Medpassport software suite for patient-relationship management.

Credited as a developer of the diabetes application of the Medpassport platform is Dr. Guillaume Charpentier, head of the diabetes research center at **Sud-Francilien Hopital** in the Paris suburb of Corbeil-Essonnes.

He tested the system with 30 patients aged 16 to 62 over a three-month period and reported a 100% satisfaction rating.

"We are trying to imitate the function of the pancreas," Charpentier said. "Where previously a patient tried to adapt meals according to an insulin dosage, here we can adapt the dose according to the meal."

Using a personal data assistant (PDA) running Windows Mobile, the patient records the glycemia levels of food consumed, along with any other relevant information such as activity level, and is immediately shown an appropriate insulin dosage according to parameters set by the physician.

The data is automatically uploaded to an Internet-hosted database that can be monitored by clinical staff, referred to by the physician, or shared with other physicians. The Medpassport program creates charts and features a patient dashboard for monitoring this complex condition.

The new PDA-based product for Type 1 diabetics was supported by **Sanofi-Aventis** (Paris), and upgrades the DiabCarnet program launched in 2003 by Voluntis for **Aide aux Jeunes Diabétiques** (Assistance for Young Diabetics; Paris), which has attracted several thousand users.

The DiabCarnet program continues under the sponsorship of **Abbott** (Abbott Park, Illinois), **Roche Diagnostics** (Basel, Switzerland), **Johnson & Johnson** (New Brunswick, New Jersey) and **Novo Nordisk** (Princeton, New Jersey).

The insurer **AXA Assistance** (Issy-les-Moulineaux, France) also has adopted the Medpassport platform for its

patient-relationship management to assure medication compliance.

Voluntis reported €600,000 (\$810,000) in sales for 2006 and in January secured €2 million (\$2.7 million) in funding to further product and market development in Europe. ■