

Smart Mobiles Slipping Past IT Managers.

Submitted by: Steinkrug Publications Ltd

Wednesday, 18 February 2004

18th February 2004. Cambridge, UK: The mobile picture phone is an interesting combination of networked PC and digital photographic technology. A company employee can purchase a handset, the price of which is subsidised by the network operator, rather than wait for their IT department to provide them with one. This fact is not lost on workers in the healthcare sector who are using standard mobile picture messaging services to trial new medical imaging applications such as wireless based PACS (Picture Archiving and Communication System).

A report published this week by ehealth consultants, Wireless Healthcare, points to an increasing number of trials that have been set up to test the performance of picture phones in medical imaging applications. According to Wireless Healthcare some of these trials fail on two levels; first the handsets and the picture messaging services cannot cope with high resolution medical images and, second, as neither the IT department or equipment vendor are involved in the trials, the lessons learned are not translated into enhanced products or improved services.

However, the report, "Wireless PACS - A Picture Of Health", points out that as trials using picture phones are simple to set up interest in the use of mobile and wireless technology in medical imaging departments is growing. The report's author, Peter Kruger, who spent over ten years in the medical imaging industry, explains. "In some respects we are seeing a re-run of the situation created by the launch of the microcomputer. Then, users found they could prototype applications at their desk without begging the IT manager for time on the organisation's mainframe. Some of these small applications form the basis of the medical imaging and PACS applications in use today."

Wireless Healthcare's report also draws attention to a number of 'formal' wireless applications, that is to say applications that do not rely on existing picture messaging services or the handset's own camera. These applications use a PDA to retrieve images directly from a PACS database, as opposed to taking a picture of a hard copy x-ray film. According to the report formal applications are usually more successful as they use tools that enable sections of a large image to be viewed on a device with a small screen.

Wireless Healthcare believe the next generation of mobile handsets and PDAs, which are likely to contain miniature hard disks and advanced CCD chips with a resolution almost as high as devices used in professional digital cameras, will broaden the range of imaging applications that employ wireless technology. The report also highlights custom built wireless imaging systems such as capsule endoscopes that contain small, wireless enabled, cameras. As these capsules pass through a patient's body the camera transmits images to a receiver worn on the patient's belt.

The report states that wireless PACS represents a significant threat to manufacturers of photographic

film. "Film manufacturers, who are already under pressure in both the consumer and healthcare sectors, have diversified into PACS by purchasing small medical imaging companies." States Kruger. "However, they are reluctant to cannibalise their revenue from medical film and have been slow to integrate digital imaging operations into their core healthcare business." Wireless Healthcare suggests that this integration must be completed before the next generation of PACS technology reaches the market. The report also notes that certain wireless imaging applications, such as remote screening for skin cancer, could provide an opportunity for film manufacturers to build a digital strategy using key elements of both their healthcare and consumer businesses."

[ends]

Wireless Healthcare is a UK based consultancy specialising in mobile healthcare and ehealth.

The report, "Wireless PACS - A Picture Of Health," costs £49+vat and is available from www.wirelesshealthcare.co.uk

For further information contact:-

Toby Jackson

Tel ++ 44 (0) 1223 208926

Email info@wirelesshealthcare.co.uk