

Chennai eye hospital uses IT advances to deliver services

BY A STAFF WRITER

The Chennai-based Sankara Nethralaya, one of India's leading eye-care hospitals, is using advances in information technology to its advantage in areas as diverse as diagnosing ophthalmological problems, maintaining electronic medical records and promoting e-learning.

The hospital, which was established in 1978 in Chennai, now has five centers in the metropolis and offers its services in various part of India, including in Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu; Bangalore; Kolkata; and Tirupati, according to a press release.

To enable doctors to diagnose medical problems at different sites or during camps organized at various locations, Sankara Nethralaya has launched a tele-consultation service with assistance from the Indian Space Research Organization. The tele-consultation is facilitated via satellites, the release said. Patient images are taken using a "fundus" camera at a camp site and are transmitted to a doctor at the hospital. The doctor uses the "visupac" viewer software to view the images and offer a diagnosis.

Another process that makes diagnosis easier for physicians is electronic medical records (EMR). "If a doctor in an operation theater needs to verify something, he or she turns to the tablet PC or laptop that runs on the EMR system to get the necessary data," M.K. Manavalan, the hospital's IT chief, is quoted as saying.

Implemented in 2007 in collaboration with Tata Consultancy Services, the EMR system stores the patient's medical data, the release said, adding that the hospital's drug inventory department also uses the system. "The store prescribes and disburses medi-



To commemorate World Elders' Day (October 1), Navasuja Sankara Nethralaya screened and counseled 137 persons on September 20, 2009 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Out of the total screened, 125 persons needed further medical treatment.

cines according to expiry dates, so even inventory management is on the network," Manavalan said.

Sampath Kumar, the hospital's chief information technology officer, is quoted as saying that the EMR system and its accompanying Hospital Management System have helped ensure the "quality of service."

"EMR has also led to an increase in the institute's productivity, allowing more patients per ... day and providing effective time management on diagnostic procedures," he is quoted as saying.

It has also made enhanced how the hospital conducts its graduate, postgraduate, research, fellowship and continuing medical education programs throughout the year, the release said. "Many a times the institute's doctors are required to address our optometry students or interact with students from other institutes. In the recent past we have enabled this interaction using video conferencing, which not only saves time lost in commuting but also ensures quality interaction with students," Jothi Balaji,

The hospital, which was established in 1978 in Chennai, now has five centers in the metropolis and offers its services in various part of India, including in Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu; Bangalore; Kolkata; and Tirupati.

manager of e-learning at the hospital, is quoted as saying.

The hospital has also established a portal called Ekalavya, which helps to conduct monthly

quizzes, upload modules consisting of ophthalmic specialties and interesting ophthalmic cases, Balaji said.

Sankara Nethralaya conducts at least 15-17 academic sessions through video-conferencing. It is also adopting webcasting to share with ophthalmologists and health-care institutes conferences and lectures held on its premises, the release said, adding continuing medical programs are also shared through webcasts.

For its successful implementation of IT initiatives, Sankara Nethralaya was presented with the "Best IT Adoption in the Health-care Sector" award in November 2008 by the National Association of Software and Services Companies.

NYPD crop of graduates most diverse ever

BY A STAFF WRITER

This Dec. 28, the New York Police Department witnessed the graduation of what the force says is the most diverse group of officers in the academy's history.

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly presided over a graduation ceremony for 250 new police officers at the Beacon Theatre.

The graduates recently completed over six months of intensive training at the Police Academy in various field assignments.

They will be assigned to Operation Impact, the program that pairs rookie officers with experienced supervisors and deploys them to targeted high-crime areas.

"Every recruit graduating today received the best training



This year's graduating class of 250 is the most diverse ever.

available in the law, tactics and community relations," said Commissioner Kelly in a release.

At least 12 percent of the 250 graduates are of Asian descent, according to NYPD. Approximately 33 percent are Hispanic, 15 percent are black, and 40 percent are white. Approximately 22 percent of the

graduates are female.

Some 137 graduates have received four-year college degrees; 30 have completed associates degrees.

They come from a wide range of professions including 31 graduates who have served in the military. Among the languages some of them speak, is Punjabi.