

## Medical information goes digital

Carlton Proctor • December 14, 2008

I'm no more tech savvy than the next guy, but it seems to me the Internet is doing for information what the copper wire did for electricity.

And, as we stumble and fumble our way through this epic economic crisis, those business that survive, and those new ventures that rise from the ashes of this meltdown, will be those that fully understand and utilize the power of the Internet.

As Andrew Grove, founder of Intel, said: "In the future all companies will be Internet companies."

Dr. Huy Nguyen, founder of Pensacola-based Cogon Systems, certainly understands the power of the Internet. And so does Craig Dalton with the Pensacola Bay Area Chamber of Commerce.

They have joined forces with the University of West Florida's School of Allied Health and Life Sciences and its director, George Stewart, to put Pensacola on the medical informatics map. What is informatics?

"What's medical informatics?" you ask.

It's software that creates a common architecture, or language, that allows the Internet transfer of medical records between hospitals and among doctors.

It allows the right hand to know what the left hand is doing.

For example, a patient checks into an emergency room in Pensacola with chest pain. He was tested in another hospital for similar pain. But he doesn't know what the tests were. As it is now, the second hospital has no way to immediately obtain the records from the first hospital.

Or a soldier has suffered injury in war. After discharge from the military, he sees a private doctor. But his military records aren't instantly available.

That's where Nguyen's company would come in, with a system allowing that instant transfer of records..

You might be wondering why they can't do this now.

For some reason — and not for lack of profits — the health-care industry is some 20 years behind when it comes to the digital storing and sharing of medical records.

President-elect Barack Obama recognizes the efficiencies of medical informatics wants to spend billions to reform the present system. Head start for Pensacola

And the really good news that Pensacola is in an excellent position to become a player in this rapidly growing sector of the health-care industry.

"We have the VA super clinic, the Naval Hospital, the Naval Operational Medicine Institute, the Center for Information Dominance, and then you have a high-tech company like Cogon," Dalton said.

"And that fits right in with the chamber's efforts for economic gardening. In other words, it's easier to grow companies here, leverage the assets you have, and create new jobs than go out an hunt down an Intel."

With the right leadership and financial backing, this could be the next big thing on Pensacola's economic development horizon.

Carlton Proctor writes business news for the News Journal. contact him at 435-8522 or at [cproctor@pnj.com](mailto:cproctor@pnj.com).