

City should realize great potential of telemedicine

Sitting in the mist of Scottsdale's tourism, nightlife and signature events is a little-known industry: telemedicine.



My Turn
RAY TORRES

It is an emerging industry with a promising future. Pillars in the health-care community such as Scottsdale Healthcare and Mayo participate in the Arizona Telemedicine Program.

Telemedicine involves a network of hospitals, clinics and doctors offering quality care via the Internet to people who otherwise might not have access to that care.

With the advancement of software applications, wireless devices, high-definition images and video, and use of the Internet as the information highway, the telemedicine network is emerging as an alternative to assessing triage situations (in rural communities, for example) saving thousands of dollars in medical costs. Further, providing online medical con-

sultation, including accessing a patient's medical records, is a development contributing to process efficiency and more people accessing quality and expert care. Additionally, medical practices have an opportunity to expand their patient care and treatment beyond their metropolitan service area.

Suzanne Sisley, a Scottsdale doctor, has been on the cutting edge of telemedicine for years. She's on the clinical faculty at St. Joseph's Hospital & Medical Center and is an assistant professor in the University of Arizona College of Medicine's Arizona Telemedicine Program.

The doctor has invested considerably in a telemedicine studio equipped with state-of-the-art technology. It has become a showcase for other practitioners to see firsthand telemedicine patient care at work. Sisley consults with over 200 patients per month, treating a wide range of acute illnesses and chronic diseases.

The company that equipped her telemedicine studio is in the Scottsdale Airpark. GlobalMedia Group designs systems that help extend patients' access to medical doctors. While they are essen-

tially a designer and manufacturer of telemedicine solutions, including software applications, they offer onsite and online training, as well as group training at their Scottsdale training center.

They work with doctors to design a system for real-time patient consults, including complying with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act requirements. GlobalMedia is poised for tremendous growth, job creation and facility expansion, benefiting Scottsdale.

While the city's economic-development officials chart a course to retain businesses in Scottsdale, they need to pay attention to the telemedicine industry. Perhaps an online market assessment and dialogue would fulfill that task.

Further, a known impediment in connecting with the telemedicine network, in some areas in the city, is not having access to a high-speed connection. Providers such as Cox and CenturyLink must clearly understand the significance of providing this service to the community.

Ray Torres, Scottsdale, is a business consultant.



Global Media's TotalExam camera transmits images used in telemedicine. GLOBAL MEDIA