

With one of the best health care systems in the world, Canada is in a prime position to contribute to medical information and education in developing countries. And with even remote villages today sporting satellite dishes, the medium is already in place.

That's where PentMed Systems Inc. of Ajax, Ontario, comes in. Drawing its expert pool of more than 20 consultants and technicians from its parent company, the Pentranic Group, the young company — established in 1998 — has taken steps to capitalize on these trends and opportunities.

"Ventures such as our international telehealth projects demonstrate that Canada has much more to offer besides wood and coal," says Tim Patterson, Managing Director of PentMed. Specializing in telemedicine technology, the company provides video conferencing systems for medical professionals around the world. "Our goal is to keep physicians practicing in their homelands instead of relocating to industrialized countries, and, ultimately, to save lives," explains Patterson.

Participation pays good dividends

To help boost his company's profile and attain its objectives, Patterson joined the Team Canada trade mission to Japan last September.

"Our status as a Team Canada participant gave us added credibility — particularly with foreign companies not familiar with us. It just made a huge difference in our manoeuvrability," he says. "We've since been approached by interested Japanese investors and I am confident we will see concrete results in the region down the road."

But Patterson's Team Canada participation also paid some unexpected — and timely — dividends. While in Japan, he was able to meet with International Trade Minister Pierre Pettigrew and his Policy Advisor André Albinati, who were able to further the negotiation of a major agree-

ment with the European Union (EU).

The mega-project — which also involves at least four Canadian medical centres — will provide content, consultation and continuing medical

education to at least eight countries across the globe, from Asia to South America.

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Ontario Telemedicine Tech Company Gets Top Treatment at Team Canada Mission

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Strong support from DFAIT

But he was also shocked by some of the media reports. "They often gave the wrong perspective of the mission. Making the same level of contacts on our own would have cost hundreds of thousands of dollars," he admits. "The trip was worth every penny."

An export commodity

What's in store for PentMed Systems? According to Patterson, the implications of telemedicine technology are wide — on a humanitarian level as well as economic.

"Not only does Canadian know-how raise health standards worldwide, as a vital export commodity, it is also a sound investment in the national economy," he explains. "Exporting our intellectual property makes money for Canadian consultants and hospitals, creating jobs at many levels. But it is also our social responsibility — as Canadians — to bring these basic necessities to developing countries."

"I also had the opportunity to outline the EU project — particularly its repercussions at the provincial level — to some of the premiers, and to Robert Wright, Deputy Minister for International Trade," Patterson adds. "During one of those meetings it was decided that I should speak at a seminar, and the Team Canada staff quickly reorganized the agenda to accommodate me. My presentation generated a lot of attention and interest."

Patterson has nothing but praise for the helpfulness of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and Canadian embassy staff while in Japan. "They assisted with the EU project and worked very hard to set up meetings — notably Gilles Séguin, Senior Education Marketing Strategist at DFAIT, who also participated in some of our sessions."

And like many other Team Canada participants, PentMed benefited tremendously from networking with other entrepreneurs. "Smaller compa-

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