

BHG provides key services to Special Olympics

Cape Town start-up, Betterhealth Global South Africa (BHG), provided key IT services to the 2007 Special Olympic Games held in Shanghai earlier last month. Special Olympics is the world's largest amateur sports organisation and provides year-round training and competition in 26 Olympic-type summer and winter sports for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

One of the activities that makes Special Olympics unique is providing free healthcare screenings at the largest of its 600 sports events worldwide each year. The programme, Healthy Athletes, uses software called HEALTHone to screen the approx 8,000 participating athletes and securely store their records.

Over the seven days of the 2007 Special Olympic Games, HEALTHone recorded 18,536 screening sessions on 4,879 athletes – a world record for Special Olympics. In addition, 2,000 medical encounters were recorded in Chinese by Chinese doctors.

BHG is the SA-based provider of HEALTHone, a global software company, however, South African skills were used in the development and implementation of the system for the 2007 Special Olympic Games. In addition, the servers storing the athletes' medical records are based at BHG's offices in the Bandwidth Barn in Cape Town.

According to Dilip Naran, BHG's MD, SA is recognised for its excellent software development skills and competitive pricing. "The SA operation provides development service to our international mother company," he says. "This is because we can provide the services at a third of the cost, and also because we have built up excellent expertise on the product due to our large-scale implementation in SA."

BHG has provided similar screening services for Anglo Platinum Mining (APM). To date, they have 145,000 medical records stored on their system. Naran says that this installation runs on a sophisticated network, and records can be accessed at any one of the APM's seven sites across SA.

For the Special Olympics, the screening of athletes has a significance beyond simply recording medical data. The information gained from the screenings highlights health problem areas and this is used by the organisation to lobby governments on behalf of the athletes and their families.

According to Naran, HEALTHone is working on a new product which will empower athletes and their families to manage their health more optimally. The product, Athletes Personal Health Record, will enable the athlete to receive a personal copy of their health record on a smartcard or memory stick which can be used whenever they visit a health practitioner.

"This is significant because usually a health record is held only with a person's GP," says Naran. "By having a personal digital health record, the athlete will be able to give their complete medical history to any health practitioner he/she visits, enabling them to receive better medical attention."

BHG is one of the tenants at the Bandwidth Barn, a Cape-based business accelerator for IT companies. According to Odette Potter, GM of Bandwidth Barn, the organisation is delighted to see the global success of another tenant. "Our aim at the Barn is to provide cost-effective

infrastructure and services to enable local IT companies to grow and expand," she says. "BHG has established itself as a successful player on the local and international stage."

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