

Emergency Care in a Flash!

Medical Information Exporter Saves Lives

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For most business people, time is money. But for Global MED-NET customers, time is often the difference between life and death—surviving a heart attack, seizure, accident, or other medical emergency. Last year, there were more than 100 million emergency room visits in the United States, and millions more around the world.

“We’re working to save lives,” says Patricia Schneider, president and CEO of the Naperville, Ill.-based firm. “Our medical storage and forwarding service enables emergency health care providers to quickly access a confidential database of detailed medical information on individual subscribers 24 hours a day, seven days a week, anywhere in the world.”

A Global MED-NET member in Victoria, B.C., Canada, is driving her car. Suddenly a wasp appears! Stung, she pulls over and phones for emergency medical assistance. Upon the arrival of emergency medical personnel, she indicates that she is a member of Global MED-NET.

Quickly, the “on-scene” emergency medical personnel phone Global MED-NET’s 24-hour operations center and speak with an emergency response operator. The Global MED-NET operator within minutes provides the woman’s medical profile, which indicates that she is allergic to wasp and bee stings. This information is forwarded to the hospital where her treatment is provided. In fact, the woman’s medical profile is at the hospital before she is transported there. She is treated and released.

A woman in Yardley, Pa., is lying on her back, unconscious. Police find the medical Global MED-NET identification on her license. Paramedics on the scene call Global MED-NET for personal information. Without this information, the paramedic would not have known that she was an insulin-dependent diabetic who was taking no fewer than six medications and was allergic to more than one medication. With this information, her treatment is quickly coordinated between paramedics and the hospital.

These people, like all members of Global MED-NET, had previously provided a medical profile that is stored in a confidential computer

database. The comprehensive medical profiles can include each member’s medical history, treatments, allergies, insurance information, emergency contact numbers, and even treatment preferences. If a member is unable to communicate during an emergency, the Global MED-NET identifier alerts medical professionals of his membership in the service. The identifier can be located on the member’s key chain, company decals, or a specially patented driver’s license attachment.

Schneider estimates there are about 600,000 Global MED-NET members in the United States, but that even more potential exists in global markets for this lifesaving service.

“In an emergency, you are typically being treated by a doctor other than your own,” explains Schneider. “Therefore your medical history will not be known or readily available at the time it is most needed. Your life may depend on the ability of the emergency doctor to get this information quickly. The need for quick access to medical information is a universal problem shared by all health care systems. Accordingly, we see great need and potential for our service throughout the world.”

SOUTH AFRICA GETS A LIFELINE

Schneider had always been fascinated by the potential for doing business abroad. Then one day, she received a call from the U.S. Commerce Department's Chicago U.S. Export Assistance Center.

"We were providing export counseling to Global MED-NET and recommended that Ms. Schneider meet with a reverse trade mission of South African companies that were going to be in Chicago," says Thelma Young, a U.S. Commercial Service trade specialist. "She was then introduced to potential business partners, including a representative of Trauma Link, a South African company."

One thing led to another, and Schneider soon found herself participating in a Commerce Department trade mission in February 2002, led by Maria Cino, then assistant secretary of commerce and director general of the U.S. Commercial Service. The mission explored new export opportunities in South Africa. During the mission, Schneider met once again with Trauma Link, with assistance from U.S. Commercial Service trade specialist Bheki Ndimande.

The eventual result? A \$1 million business contract with Trauma Link to provide faster and more immediate access to their members' medical information, globally. Global MED-NET's service is being packaged as part of Trauma Link's Netcare 911 service, under the name of Global ID. Netcare 911 is Africa's largest provider of world-class, fully integrated pre-hospital emergency assistance services. It provides emergency medical rescue assistance via ambulances and rapid-response vehicles. It is expected that Global ID will help the effectiveness of these emergency assistance services, and save lives.

"This is a vitally important service in South Africa, where emergency health care is in high demand," Schneider



Photo courtesy of Global MED-NET.

says. "It is estimated that every 47 minutes a person is killed in a vehicle accident in South Africa, according to Trauma Link."

Schneider says the company's strategic goal is to have 16 million subscribers in South Africa. Global MED-NET has even received publicity from the highly rated South African television show, *Red Alert*, which features real-life stories of people who have been saved by medical technology.

Now that the firm has made its first export sale, Schneider is looking for more. Global MED-NET has participated in U.S. Commerce Department trade missions to Italy and Spain, Egypt and Morocco, and Peru and Chile.

"We have doctors and medical professionals on an international delegate advisory board that consists of 50 physicians from 38 countries who provide guidance and advice on medical

information and facilities," Schneider says. "They represent more than 80 percent of the world's population, so we stay well connected to medical developments in these markets."

In June, Phillip Bond, under secretary of commerce for technology, presented Global MED-NET International with the U.S. Commerce Department's Export Achievement Certificate. The certificate recognizes companies that have benefited from the export services of the U.S. Commercial Service to make their first export sale or open new foreign markets.

"That trade mission was a high-result, low-cost avenue to finding the best partner in South Africa," Schneider adds. "I look forward to my continued relationship with the Commerce Department." ■