Technology changing the lives of newborns

By Ilse van den Berg

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This week, I attended an event at Groote Schuur Hospital to celebrate the fantastic patient management solution T-Systems, in partnership with the Wayde Dreamer Foundation, have designed and donated to the Newborns Groote Schuur Trust.

Dr. Patel, CEO of Groote Schuur Hospital, kicked off the morning's programme with a welcome and overview of the Newborns Groote Schuur Trust.

The trust, an independent non-governmental organisation (NGO), was founded in 2008 and raises funds to support the work of the neonatal unit at the Groote Schuur Hospital, primarily for the care and treatment of over 2,000 of the 40,000 babies born in Cape Town's southern peninsula region every year.

One of the highlights of the morning was hearing from 400m World record holder, Wayde van Niekerk, and his mother, Odesa Swarts. Swarts recounted how Van Niekerk was taken care of as a premature baby (born at 29 weeks) at Groote Schuur Hospital and how close the cause of premature babies lies to their hearts.

The problems

Dr. Joolay, neonatologist at Groote Schuur Hospital, explained some of the problems the hospital ran into once newborn babies were taken home, such as parents never bringing the babies back for crucial followups.

Says Mpumi Nhlapo, head of T-Systems South Africa's IT portfolio and solution sales: "Wayde first showed his dedication to this cause by making a generous personal donation of half a million rand to the Newborns Groote Schuur Trust. T-Systems was very interested in where we could leverage ICT to address some of the most critical points of the neonatal unit."

The neonatal unit has been using a manual system for management of communication. Particularly, the tracking of patients, updating contact details, and scheduling appointments were key concerns. Keeping track of appointments and ensuring parents were notified and reminded of times and cancellations proved to be difficult, often resulting in missed appointments.

While functional on a basic level, the system was allowing for inefficiencies and errors which, in an environment where the preservation of life and eyesight is key, needed to be addressed with critical urgency.

The solution

"We have designed and implemented a patient management solution that is built on Microsoft's Dynamics CRM Online system. This solution will assist in effectively managing contact information, patient bookings, appointments, confirmations as well as generate appointment reminders for *ROP visits and Neurodevelopmental Clinics.

Additionally, the system is capable of scheduling and managing staff standby rosters in line with set business rules, reducing the pressure on doctors and nurses and ensuring proper availability of both is catered for," says Nhlapo.

"In South Africa, for South Africa"

Through USSD technology, even parents in the most remote parts of the Western Cape can be reached and reminded of their appointments.

Speaking about this gesture, Gert Schoonbee, MD at T-Systems South Africa said, "our involvement in this project is a natural fit, particularly when considering our motto of 'in South Africa, for South Africa'. We are proud to be involved in this initiative and, together with Wayde, are committed to contributing positively towards reducing the high mortality rate caused by complications in premature babies. We are extremely proud of the role of our partner, Microsoft, who contributed by reducing licence fees for their platforms."

*ROP is a disease of the eye that occurs in premature babies. It causes abnormal blood vessels to grow in the retina and the layer of the nerve tissue in the eye that enables us to see. The growth can cause the retina to detach from the back of the eye, leading to blindness.

ABOUT ILSE VAN DEN BERG

Ilse is a freelance journalist and editor with a passion for people & their stories (check out Passing Stories). She is also the editor of Go & Travel, a platform connecting all the stakeholders in the travel & tourism industry. You can check out her work here and here. Contact Ilse through her website here.

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