



Lebab
Healthcare
Spain

Bringing a Common Language to Healthcare

A British airline passenger became ill during a stopover at Madrid Barajas Airport and was rushed to a nearby medical facility. The attending physician spoke English but, understandably, with an accent. What the patient couldn't understand was why the doctor was seemingly asking him if he had a pine in his stomach.

The obvious challenges to providing medical care today include the rising cost of drugs, the increasing resistance of viruses to antibiotics, and endemic poverty in much of the developing world. The ability of a doctor and patient to understand each other shouldn't be one of those challenges. But it is. One consequence of globalization has been an increase in immigration throughout the industrialized world. By some estimates, immigrant populations account for 23 percent of the populations of industrialized countries. That includes a lot of people who are unlikely to share a native language with their healthcare providers.

Interpreters have been a common solution to this problem—but interpreters aren't always available and may not be well-versed in medical terminology, and patients may be reticent to divulge sensitive medical information in front of them. This can be especially true when a patient brings a child or spouse to the examining room to interpret.

That's why Lebab Systems, based in Madrid, Spain, created its "interpreter to integration" solution. The software includes a database of 70,000 "yes or no" medical questions including more than 160,000 medical terms, translated into English, Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, Romanian, and Bulgarian. Using "interpreter to integration", a doctor or other healthcare provider can ask questions in his or her native language, provide written and audio translations through the software, and immediately understand the patient's yes-or-no response.

The result can be the difference between life and death for an emergency-room patient. It can also mean better healthcare for large sections of a community. For example, a Chinese patient in a Spanish healthcare facility was so pleased with the care he received, thanks to "interpreter to integration", that he told his family and friends about the experience—and the facility saw a large increase in Chinese patients, for preventative care and regular checkups as well as for emergency visits. And healthcare providers are finding new ways to use the solution; for example, some doctors are loading the software on their laptops and using it to treat home-bound patients.

"Interpreter to integration" is helping to make medical care more efficient as well as more effective. Lebab Systems says that the software, in use since 2005, has helped to reduce average consultation times in half, to 17 minutes, reducing the cost of effective care and thus increasing access to that care, while at the same time providing a solution that helps respect a patient's right to privacy.

The software is based on a range of Microsoft technologies, including Windows Presentation Foundation in the Microsoft .NET Framework, which takes maximum advantage of the latest graphics capabilities of today's PCs to provide a highly visual interface. The software also uses Microsoft SQL Server Express Edition, to support its extensive database on desktop PCs and laptop computers. In the future, Lebab Systems envisions expanding the solution to support police services, municipal and other social services, and customs and border control services.

For more information, please visit www.microsoft.com/isv