

# New Web tool speeds patient medical profiles

## Patients use pen, computer tablet to update histories

BY NATHAN BOMEY  
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Healthcare Data Solutions, a small Ann Arbor firm, has developed a Web application that might redefine the way medical patients answer health history questions.

The company recently signed a contract with Integrated Health Associates, which will incorporate Healthcare Data Solutions' new Patient-Kiosk technology into its clinical operations.

HDS has developed a Web application that interacts with a pen tablet and allows patients to answer health questions digitally. The system could help doctors' offices, clinics and emergency rooms save paper, save time and improve Medicare reimbursement rates, said Phil Barr, the company's president and technical director.

"Actually it's applicable anywhere patients are waiting," Barr said. "It's really a broad-based technology, which we're marketing for emergency medicine, family practices, OBGYN and occupational medicine."

IHA has agreed to start using the PatientKiosk in its local clinics, starting this spring.

The new tool interfaces smoothly with a medical office's practice management system, Barr said.

The technology allows patients to update their medical profiles each time they visit the office without having to completely fill out a new form. The digital system will save time and labor costs by eliminating the need to manually input results into a computer.



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Greg Tracy, left, with Phil Barr, president of Healthcare Data Solutions.. | ROBERT RAMEY

# Auto supplier merges operations at Canton site

BY SONJA BRODIE  
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Automotive packaging and distribution firm Feblo International is consolidating two of its warehouses into a large new facility in Canton.

The Tier 1 supplier has signed a five-year lease for a 121,256-square-foot industrial space on Haggerty Road, in a deal brokered by Steve Gordon and Gary Sallen of Signature Associates.

Feblo is consolidating other warehouses in Detroit and Dearborn into the Canton facility, which comes with 16 loading docks and four drive-in bays. It is keeping its main site in Livonia.

The company will have the same square footage in the new location, but the facility represents an efficiency improvement of about 20 percent in terms of the number of items handled, said general manager Ralph Bergemann.

The Canton warehouse started operating on April 1 and currently has 20 employees, which will grow to 75 when the consolidation is complete, Bergemann said. Most of these 75 employees will come from the old sites, he added.

The location near the airport and major highways was important in the decision for the move, Bergemann noted. "The location in Canton is positioning us for further growth," he said.

The Tier 1 supplier separated from Hollingsworth Logistics North America, a group of supply-chain management companies, in January this year when its president Robert Gruschow, whose father founded Feblo, bought out the company. It is currently in a process of restructuring, Bergemann said. A new Web site also is under construction.

Feblo offers packaging, warehousing, shipping and parts distribution. Its customers are exclusively automotive and the company ships directly to dealers and service parts warehouses, said Bergemann. It also serves as a depot for all Hummer II service parts on a consignment basis.

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# New mortgage broker entering local market

BY SONJA BRODIE  
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A new mortgage broker is about to enter the Ann Arbor market, despite the slow-down in residential housing construction and sales.

Ann Arbor will serve as the regional operations center for International Mortgage Solutions, said Thomas Unger, CEO.

The startup enters the market as new mortgages written in the county fell 23 percent since 2005 and forecasts call for a further drop. According to Washtenaw County's Register of Deeds, 21,328 mortgages were written here in 2006, down from 27,843 in 2005.

"We believe that where there is a shake-up, there is an opportunity to find better talent," said Unger. "People will still need mortgages."

International Mortgage Solutions, a subsidiary of Western Michigan-based Public Financial Services LLC, expects to open by early May.

The office will house up to seven loan officers, two processing staff members and chief operating officer Daniel B. Peluso. The firm has leased 2,200 square feet in south Ann Arbor's Concord Office Center in a deal brokered by Bart Wise of Swisher Commercial. International Mortgage Solutions also took an additional 500-square-foot office in the building. That space has been sublet to Stewart Title Agency of Southfield.

Huron Valley Financial president Eric Bradley said that the Ann Arbor area has at least 40 mortgage companies, but that the majority of names have changed over the last decade.

Because of the tight-knit community in Ann Arbor it is more difficult to get a foothold in the mortgage market here than, for example, in Southfield, said Bradley.

"Realtors aren't familiar with the name, the community isn't familiar with the name... That's one of the struggles I see for companies coming into this market," he said. "Ann Arbor is a big little town and it takes more than coming in and putting up a sign to be successful in this market."

Another challenge for both established and new mortgage brokers is that, with the sub-prime market, underwriting guidelines change on a daily basis, Bradley added.

Unger said his company chose Ann Arbor because of its median home values and because of the potential for greater volume of business, compared with other Michigan communities.

"If you look at the Michigan market, we saw Ann Arbor as having more commercial activity," he said.

One of the niches IMS will be focusing on is helping foreign nationals get mortgage-

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## ► INCUBATOR

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The university will in turn sublease 12,000 square feet of that space to SPARK for a wet lab incubator, which would provide space for small biotech companies that don't have access to expensive facilities right away.

Elizabeth Parkinson, SPARK's director of marketing and public relations, said the proposed agreement is just one step toward finalizing the wet lab.

"We're probably a couple weeks away from saying that's a done deal," she said. "Negotiations are still in place."

But Parkinson acknowledged that a wet lab incubator would serve as a positive

force for the local business community.

"It certainly would, I think, support companies that have a need for specific, high-quality lab space" and young companies in particular, she said.

The 34,400 square feet in Traverwood was leased through 2010 by Parke Davis & Co. Pfizer took over that obligation as it absorbed the drug company, and it announced in early 2006 that it would vacate the site as it moved leased labs and offices onto its 2.3 million square-foot campus in northeast Ann Arbor.

The revelation that SPARK is close to a deal to get access to a location for a wet lab incubator would bring to an end a long-standing search for space. SPARK last year requested funding for the project from the

21st Century Jobs Fund, but that request was denied (*Business Review*, Aug. 3-9, 2006).

The project took on a sense of urgency in the aftermath of Pfizer's decision to close its Ann Arbor operations by the end of 2008.

SPARK and other community entities are seeking to build the county's life sciences industry, and operating a wet lab has been identified as a key component toward that.

According to university documents, SPARK won't have to pay a base rental fee on the facility until Jan. 1, 2011, because Pfizer had a separate early termination agreement in the lease and paid the base fee for SPARK's space for the first three years.

From 2011 to 2013, SPARK would pay monthly rent of \$19,500 to the university in

addition to its utility and operating expenses.

The university would agree to pay \$35,890 a month in 2008, \$35,190 in 2009, \$34,460 in 2010 and \$55,900 in 2011 and 2012.

Pfizer would allow the university to use the 7,000 square feet from May 1 through Dec. 31 for free. The university has estimated that its utility and operating expenses would be about \$11,667 per month.

Ken Nisbet, executive director of the university's technology transfer office, and SPARK CEO Michael Finney could not be reached for comment by press time.

Rick Chambers, Midwest spokesman for Pfizer, referred questions to SPARK.

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## ► SCIO

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■ Applebee's will be seeking building permits this month for a restaurant approved for a Meijer Inc. store outlet. Meanwhile, construction of the new Big Boy restaurant at Zeeb just north of the boulevard is nearing completion.

"That's the good news," said Darrell Fecho, township manager. "These things are actually getting into the ground now."

In addition, two major retail centers remain in development in the township: Honey Creek, a mixed-use project by Michael Concannon and Toll Bros., and West Scio Center, planned near the Baker Road interchange. Honey Creek will be before planners again in May, according to Jason Minnock of Toll Bros. Fecho said the township has had little recent communication from West Scio Center developer Rene Papo, who did not return calls seeking comment.

The township remains attractive to retailers, according to Max Goldman of real estate brokerage Ludwig & Seeley of Farmington Hills.

"I think it's the one part of Ann Arbor that's underdeveloped," Goldman said.

Goldman has the listing for the center on the Quality 16 outlet, where Expressions in Hardware and Cold Stone Creamery will be among the first tenants.

## ► DATA SOLUTIONS

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When a doctor or clinician uses the PatientKiosk, the system automatically displays changes in a patient's medical history since their last visit.

Barr said the initial installation of PatientKiosk costs \$25,000. He said the company is still developing the revenue model for the product. It will probably depend either on annual usage fees or will be based on a percentage of each client's improved rate of Medicare cost reimbursement.

The market for electronic patient records technology is expected to experience significant growth during the next few years.

Barr estimated that 5 to 8 percent of medical offices have electronic patient record entry systems right now. But he said, that figure is projected to increase to 80 percent within five years.

Retail leasing rates on the corridor in the Wagner/Zeeb area hover between \$25-35 per square foot, which compares to some sites on Washtenaw and new construction on Plymouth Road.

Broder & Sachse got the Lowe's outlets rezoned for commercial use this spring, and next will seek approval of their final site plan.

The company already manages a few million square feet of retail property, Hurwitz said, in addition to its office and residential portfolios.

Building retail centers, Hurwitz said, "has been our focus, doing small-format retail shadowed by 'big box' tenants."

Hurwitz said the company is attracted to Jackson Road because of its projected growth patterns and lack of spaces for national tenants.

Lowe's will be a natural draw to the site, Hurwitz added.

Hurwitz would not disclose the land price, though the estimated market value for the two parcels is \$2.8 million, based on assessments. The combined purchase price was \$1.984 million in 2002, according to county records.

Leasing for the Broder & Sachse project will be done by Landmark Commercial, Hurwitz said.

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Greg Tracy, HDS' network and data analyst, said the market is promising.

"I think it's one of the few growth industries in Michigan right now," he said.

HDS has also been working on a voice-activated physician documentation application in cooperation with Business Health Services. The system uses voice recognition technology called Dragon NaturallySpeaking 9.

"They've really gotten up to highly accurate results. It's incredible to see physicians using it," Barr said.

Barr said the voice-activated system has hastened the patient discharge process, allowing doctors to verbally enter information such as discharge instructions, work restrictions and future appointments.

Barr said Business Health Services saved \$150,000 on dictation costs last year by using the system.

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