

Health Informatics Awards

AWARD RECIPIENTS



Gala

COACH

Innovation in the Adoption of Health Informatics Award North Network

The recipient of this year's Innovation in the Adoption of Health Informatics Award presented at the first Canadian Health Informatics Awards Gala in November 2005 was a non-profit, member-based organization that facilitates the integration of telemedicine into everyday practice by making the technology easy to use, providing telemedicine technology expertise for all of its partners, interfacing with government and regulatory bodies and increasing awareness among health providers and the public of the benefits of telemedicine.

It was with great pleasure that COACH awarded the first Innovation Award to **NORTH Network**, renowned as a Canadian and international leader in the adoption of telemedicine into the mainstream of health care services.

Their ability to implement their program is based on a change management approach that is clearly "leading edge". They understand that it is the health care providers, not the equipment, which is the backbone of the telemedicine system. Key feature of this strategy include local leadership at every site, enhanced regional communication, adaptation to First Nations communities, maintenance of existing referral patterns, comprehensive training and turnkey technology support.

Their operational record is astounding – facilitating over 1200 clinical consultations monthly, over a network of 190 sites and linking over 2000 physicians - unmatched anywhere in Canada – and receiving an astonishing 95% approval rate among patients, referring physicians and specialists! Their impact on health care delivery is such that without it, more than 18,000 patients this year would have to travel to receive care. Putting aside the obvious positive impact on patient quality of life, consider that since 2001, the provincial government has avoided over \$7M in travel subsidies.

In addition, in partnership with those members having an educational mandate, this organization supports over 250 educational sessions a month, attended by up to 3000 participants from a diverse professional group including family physicians, specialists, nurses, rehab therapists, and other allied health professionals. While the majority of these educational sessions are delivered through video-conferencing, others are enabled through webcasting. In all its endeavours, this innovator is strongly committed to distance-based technologies that provide access and opportunity to education not otherwise possible.

This program is easily transferable to other parts of the health care system because it is built on partnerships, based not just on financial commitments, but on shared vision, common goals and active participation, all crucial to sustainable health care delivery in Canada. Their success is in having established a process to bring everyone together. Their innovative approach is now being used as a model by health care providers across the country, a tangible example being their sharing of business processes and best practices in their participation in the development of Canada Health Infoway's Telehealth Toolkit. Through this documentation, telemedicine networks across Canada can benefit from their successes as well as lessons learned.

COACH congratulates **Dr. Ed Brown**, Executive Director, on tremendous success that he and his team have had in improving service delivery within the health care system by using the power of partnership and technology, and above all, innovation.