



Delivering Johns Hopkins Expertise to the World

Prestigious medical institute uses Polycom video for life-saving telemedicine and medical education as well as to save time and generate revenue

Johns Hopkins International is an independent LLC within world-renowned Johns Hopkins Medicine and is responsible for coordinating international patient care for up to 3,500 patients per year. In 1999, the organization began reevaluating the way physicians and administrators exchange information with clients overseas in an effort to reduce travel time and costs and generate additional revenue. That evaluation resulted in the deployment of a Polycom video conferencing solution that facilitates the treatment of international patients, research and clinical trials with teams dispersed throughout the world. It also provides international access to lectures given by Johns Hopkins physicians, which include many of the world's top doctors and researchers.

In Demand Around the World

"The demands on our physicians and the requests for their knowledge from individuals and organizations around the globe are tremendous," says Alexander Nason, senior manager of business development for Johns Hopkins International. "Video conferencing is helping us reach people more efficiently than was previously possible. When appropriate, we can coordinate patient care, offer educational content to medical teams in other countries, provide critical second opinions, consult with hospital management and offer remote participation in promising clinical trials."

Video communications became even more mission critical for Johns Hopkins after September 11 because of increased airport security and longer waiting periods for patients hoping to travel to the U.S. for care.

Calling the Best for a Second Opinion

"On one specific occasion, a man from the United States was traveling on business in Brazil and suffered a heart attack," says Nason. "The doctors in Brazil recommended surgery at their hospital, advising that travel was medically unsafe for the patient. The patient requested a second opinion from a physician at Johns Hopkins and, by way of video conferencing, our physician viewed images of his test results and concurred that the patient should have surgery in Brazil. Video conferencing enabled our physician to consult on the case without having to travel, provided the patient and his family with peace of mind and allowed the Brazilian hospital to continue to take the lead with this patient's care. It really was a win-win situation."

Sharing Knowledge

In addition to telemedicine applications, a frequent use of the video conferencing systems at Johns Hopkins is education. For example, the organization's Minimally Invasive Surgical Training Center includes three rooms and laboratories with video conferencing capabilities. A Johns Hopkins physician can demonstrate a procedure for a 35-seat auditorium and to anyone in the world with video conferencing capabilities.

Johns Hopkins International also uses video to deliver its GlobalAccess Lecture Series, an educational program that provides physicians around the world with the latest medical updates from their colleagues at Johns Hopkins.

The series of classes includes over 200 topics in more than 30 medical specialties. Each 60-minute program features 45 minutes of lecture and 15 minutes for an interactive question-and-answer session. The GlobalAccess Lecture series has connected physician groups in Argentina, Colombia, Peru, Singapore and various parts of the Middle East, and more than 50 topics are available in different languages. The program is expanding to include nursing and hospital management.

"We considered delivering our lecture series through a webcast, but the interactive nature of video conferencing adds a whole new dimension to the experience," adds Nason. "We've received extremely positive feedback from lecture audiences on the question-and-answer portion of the program, and that's not something we'd be able to offer in a standard webcast."

Video and Data

The customized video and data solution at Johns Hopkins International relies on Polycom ViewStation® group video communications systems. The organization also frequently uses Polycom VisualConcert™ data collaboration, which enables the live sharing of PC content during a video call. VisualConcert is particularly useful for lectures between Johns Hopkins physicians and audiences in other countries because the U.S.-based doctor can augment the lecture with a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation that includes embedded video feeds and images.

Collaboration Delivers

Johns Hopkins International has achieved significant cost savings using Polycom video conferencing solutions. It has reduced the need to send medical teams abroad, increased its efficiency in meeting with various groups and provided a cost-effective, value-added benefit to international health organizations.

"Not only does the organization save money on tangible travel costs, but physicians also spend less time away from their jobs at the hospital," says Nason. "Additionally, with reduced costs, increased productivity and the ability to offer lectures to sites around the world, we are increasing the revenue generated from international consultations."

Looking ahead, Johns Hopkins International will continue to build its telemedicine program. "This is the future," says Nason. "We are removing barriers to quality care and enabling the world to take advantage of Johns Hopkins' tremendous array of resources."