



The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

Final Copy of Case Study

YEAR:
2012

STATUS:
Laureate

Organization:
HIV Online Provider Education (HOPE) Program, Massachusetts General Hospital

Organization URL:
<http://www.massgeneral.org>

Project Name:
Harvard University Center for AIDS Research HIV Online Provider Education (HOPE) Program

**What social/humanitarian issue was the project designed to address?
What specific metrics did you use to measure the project's success?**

The Harvard University-based HOPE program connects HIV and AIDS treatment experts worldwide to help combat the AIDS epidemic. Participants discuss treatment of HIV/AIDS and how to improve the care of patients living in the epicenter of the epidemic, such as in Africa. The program also focuses on recent success in HIV prevention to achieve what President Obama has called an "AIDS-free generation." The HIV Online Provider Education (HOPE) Program was established in 2003 to link sites in the United States to those in resource-limited settings around the world to provide education as well as an opportunity for medical professionals to discuss HIV-related issues and medical care. The HOPE program started just as South Africa, which has the most HIV+ patients in the world, was making HIV drugs available to its citizens. The HOPE program played an important role in providing training and information to doctors and other health care professionals in South Africa who were providing care to infected patients. The HOPE program hosts twice-monthly conferences that connect medical professionals in the United States, Africa, Asia and the Caribbean to each other via real-time web conferencing technology provided by Saba. Saba Centra Real-time Collaboration provides a model for health care and other organizations seeking to connect remote users with each other and to other parts of the world for the purpose of sharing timely information and engaging in real-time dialogue. In this particular usage, it is used to help save lives around the world as medical providers become up to date with the latest HIV/AIDS issues, prevention and treatment.

Please describe the technologies used and how those technologies were deployed in an innovative way. Also, please include any technical or other challenges that were overcome for the successful implementation of the project.

The HOPE program measures the success of the program and its impact in three different ways: First, the numbers of attendees in its twice-monthly meetings are measured. HOPE looks to see if there are a consistent amount of attendees at each conference and that these attendees are spanning the world. Second, the diversity and location of the participants is measured. HOPE checks to see that there is both diversity in conversation, types of medical professionals, and location. Third, a 4-5 question survey is given at the end of each conference using the Saba Centra Real-time Collaboration product. This is a relatively new practice for the program, but has been very helpful in giving the organization real-time feedback. HOPE collects information about the relevance of the conference series to the attendees' practices, the impact that the series made on the attendees' care of patients, ideas for future topics/conferences, and problems that attendees may have encountered.

Please list the specific humanitarian benefits the project has yielded so far.

Over the past quarter century, more than 25 million people worldwide have died from AIDS, and tens of millions more are living with HIV. While significant advances in HIV/AIDS treatment approaches have been made in recent years, this information is not universally available to the physicians and other medical providers caring for patients. Hence, the HOPE program has been embraced from the start as a formidable weapon in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The program began as a way to connect clinicians in Boston with their counterparts in South Africa and has grown steadily over the years. It now includes participants across the U.S. and around the world including Botswana, China, Dominican Republic, Haiti, India, Lesotho, Malawi, Peru, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, and the UK. This program provides cutting-edge information and training to doctors and nurses in resource-limited settings throughout the world, including those hit hardest by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Please provide the best example of how the project has benefited a specific individual, enterprise or organization. Feel free to include personal quotes from individuals who have directly benefited from the work.

HOPE has benefitted participants by being a truly interactive forum. The participants feel that they are part of a global virtual classroom. Clinicians in the U.S. learn as much from those around the world as people in other sites learn from the U.S. The more attendees learn and share, the more effective they are in helping to address HIV/AIDS. Another interesting aspect of the HOPE Program is that the conference topics are chosen by the group as a whole so that all topics are fresh and of interest globally to everyone attending. Some conferences hold 30-minute lectures followed by 20- to 30-minute discussions whereas others can follow a different format; the audience dictates the conference topics in its entirety. For example, when there was an outbreak of H1N1 influenza around the world, HOPE held a talk on the pandemic followed by statistics and information given by South African public health officials. Additionally, participants save significantly on travel costs and on time that would be lost flying to conferences, while benefiting from answers in real time. HOPE used to hold an annual in-person meeting to discuss hot topics, but the cost and travel time would often discourage busy medical professionals from participating but once every few years. With the ability to make a difference in the conversation by only devoting an hour or two of their time, medical staff from around the world can take part in the bi-weekly HOPE conferences. For those who cannot attend, recordings of each conference are securely archived and are often accessed by up to several thousand clinicians. Of course, the ultimate beneficiaries are HIV/AIDS patients and the general public. Collaboration venues for global information sharing such as the HOPE program are vital in combating HIV/AIDS.