

# High-tech house calls a click away

Creators of medical service are gunning for top prize

By **Tony Lombardo** | *Staff Writer*

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Neurologist David Hess can treat stroke victims from anywhere there's high-speed Internet.

He has done it from home, while on vacation and even at a Taco Bell.

For the past three years, he and other staffers at the Medical College of Georgia have developed a technology that allows a neurologist to view a patient, and brain scans, via the Internet.

Currently, the service is largely used at rural hospitals in Georgia, which don't often have neurologists, but the technology's creators are trying to make it a viable business.

"We bring the neurologist to the patient," said Dr. Hess, the chairman of MCG's department of neurology. "We can't drive there, so we go through the Internet."

In March, he and the technology's other creators formed REACHMD Consult, with plans to launch the service nationwide.

To do that, however, the company needs capital.

REACHMD serves nine hospitals in a 100-mile radius of Augusta, Dr. Hess said, but the hospitals aren't paying for the service. The hope is to expand those services in other states and charge for installation, maintenance and consultation services, he said.

To help expand the business, the company recently entered into a statewide contest seeking startups emphasizing information security and the convergence of voice data and video services.

The purpose was to "create more and better high-tech jobs," said Sid Elliott, the contest's lead organizer.

Coordinated by the Technology Association of Georgia and the Georgia Research Alliance, the New Business Launch Competition started with 50 candidates, which have been whittled down to four by its judges.

REACHMD is the only company represented in the health field.

The winning company will receive \$100,000 in cash and \$150,000 in professional services such as office space or law advice. The winning company must agree to launch the company and keep it in Georgia. If the company moves out within the first three years, it must return the \$100,000 with 8 percent interest.

The final presentations will take place from 1 to 6 p.m. Thursday and can be viewed via webcast at <http://www.tagonline.org/>.

Judges chose REACHMD as a finalist because they "saw it as an important application of technology that was badly needed," Mr. Elliott said.

When a patient is suffering from a stroke, quick diagnosis and treatment are essential for minimizing harm.

"There's only one drug that works for a stroke, and it has to be given in three hours. That's the reason for such a rush," Dr. Hess said.

Before this service, stroke victims would arrive at one of these smaller hospitals and then be taken to a larger facility, Dr. Hess said. Now, the company's technology allows a neurologist to view the data within minutes and make the call.



**Ross Taylor/Staff**

Dr. David Hess, the chairman of the neurology department at the Medical College of Georgia, is a founder of REACHMD Consult, an Internet-based company that serves stroke patients. He and the other creators are seeking capital to expand the service.



**Ross Taylor/Staff**

This is the REACH Cart which is one of the main components of the REACHMDConsult - at right is the camera that shows the patient and at left is the computer screen that shows the information.

Even if REACHMD doesn't win the contest, the company is going to continue to seek investors, Dr. Hess said. The company has also applied for a \$1 million grant from the National Institutes of Health.

In time, Dr. Hess sees REACHMD going international and expanding its services to include other neurological emergencies and traumas, such as heart attacks.

"We always try to service the ER doctors in these local hospitals," Dr. Hess said. "What do they need the most help with? That's what we would focus on first."

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Finalists in the New Business Launch Competition:

**REACHMD Consult:** An Augusta-based company hoping to increase the diagnosis of stroke victims by using the Internet.

**Diagis:** An Atlanta-based company developing software to find security flaws in computer programs before they hit the market.

**Evoca:** A Savannah, Ga.-based company that provides a service allowing consumers to create, organize and search audio files online.

**Intrinsic Security:** An Atlanta-based company developing a program to monitor high-speed networks and detect potential attacks to its security.

Sources: Technology Association of Georgia, Georgia Research Alliance

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