

Opening new vistas

The recent tie-up with a Singapore company opens new opportunities for Bangalore-based Teleradiology Solutions

The National Healthcare Group (NHG), Singapore, one of the largest health care groups of Singapore, recently set up a joint venture with an Indian company. It was not with any of the biggies though. NHG's Indian partner is the Bangalore-based Teleradiology Solutions founded by the husband-wife team of Dr Arjun Kalyanpur and Dr Sunita Maheshwari.

The NHG and Teleradiology Solutions are equal partners in the new entity named Telerad Singapore and have invested S\$100,000 each. Based in Singapore, Telerad will essentially serve as a front-end marketing organisation. It will leverage NHG's strong branding to enter new geographies like the UK, Australia, Malaysia, the Gulf countries etc.

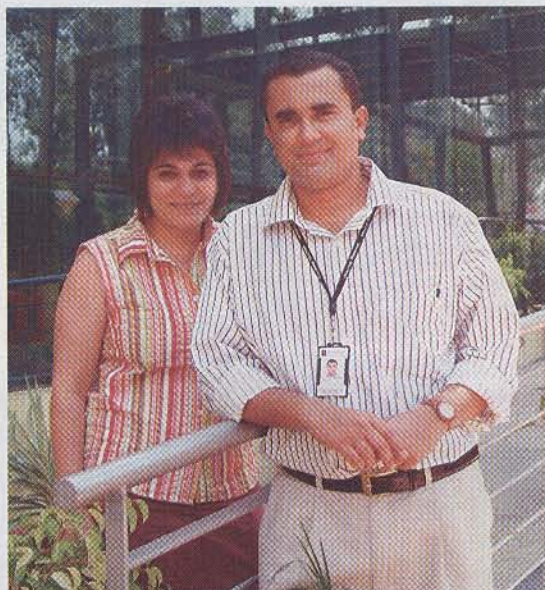
NHG's association with Teleradiology Solutions in fact goes back to 2005 when the former first started outsourcing some of its radiology requirements to it. Impressed by the company's strong capabilities and deep commitment, NHG then decided to enter into a deeper relationship. Says Dr Lim Suet Wun, CEO, NHG: "This joint venture is a significant milestone in NHG's development within Asia and around the world."

The partnership between the NHG and Teleradiology Solutions is important, however, not just for these two players. More significantly, it is indicative of the growing importance of India in teleradiology and in the global healthcare arena. As Kalyanpur, CEO and chief radiologist, points out: "We hope that it will be a significant step towards establishing India as a leading destination for telemedicine."

Teleradiology Solutions was set up in 2002 and was the first of its kind to provide hospitals in the United States with radiology solutions from India. These include remote interpretation of all non-invasive imaging studies like CT, MRI, ultra sound, nuclear medicine studies and digitised x-rays.

Interestingly, it was a chance

remark that led to the genesis of Teleradiology Solutions. Kalyanpur and Maheshwari had returned to India in 1999 after spending nine years in the US. During one of his visits back to the US in 2001, Kalyanpur got into a discussion with other colleagues about the shortage of radiologists in the US, especially during the night shifts.



Maheshwari and Kalyanpur: global success

During the course of this discussion, pointing to the time difference between the two countries, Kalyanpur casually remarked: "I could work for you, but from India."

Troubled times

What was said in jest, however, offered a whole new world of possibilities. Kalyanpur did a one month pilot project for the Yale University School of Medicine and successfully proved the feasibility of remote interpretation of imaging studies. He then set up a home office in Bangalore with two computers and started handling around 10-15 cases a day from Yale. But six months down the road the project ran into trouble.

Kalyanpur and Maheshwari did

not lose heart though. By then they had realised the tremendous value that teleradiology could offer by way of speedy, high quality, cost effective diagnosis and decided to venture full steam ahead. They put forth their service model to other hospitals in the United States and what started as a small trickle soon turned into a growing stream. Teleradiology Solutions now handles around 700 cases a day across 50 hospitals in the US, four clinics in Singapore and 10 hospitals in India. The company presently has a team of 120 which includes 25 radiologists, eight of whom are certified

by the American Board of Radiology, which is the key. Without Board certified radiologists they would not be able to offer their services to US clients.

While Kalyanpur and Maheshwari are tightlipped about the revenues, they say that the venture has been growing 50 per cent year on year and has been profitable from the very beginning. Over the past five years the duo has invested close to Rs30 crore in the business including the new 70,000 sq ft facility that became operational in November last year. All the funding till now has been from personal and internal accruals.

As per the growth plans, in the next five years the total team size is likely to be around 400 and revenues are expected to grow three times. Other new verticals that Maheshwari and Kalyanpur are looking at include clinical trials, radiology, electronic medical record work, IT support and consulting for telemedicine, health care software development and marketing other telemedicine activities like tele-pathology, etc.

Meanwhile, even as Kalyanpur and Maheshwari are all enthused about putting India in the global map of telemedicine, part of their efforts and 5 per cent of their annual profits are directed towards developing low cost teleradiology solutions.

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