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Helping doctors deal doses

Dr. Walt Kagan of Quincy's Commonwealth Hematology-Oncology is one of the converts to Intrinsic Data Corp's IntelliDose system for control dosage and delivery of drugs to patients. Page 3



Intrinsic software helps hospitals keep drug dosages on the mark

BY J U DY STRINGER
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Responding to the need for an automated system to prevent dangerous and even deadly chemotherapy administration errors, Intrinsic Data Corp. of Waltham introduced a software program in 1996 to make sure cancer patients are given the right treatment with the correct doses.

Today, Intrinsic's software package, called IntelliDose, has undergone three years of enhancement during field trials at roughly a dozen cancer treatment centers, including the state's largest private-practice cancer care group, Quincy-based Commonwealth Hematology-Oncology. The current version has been installed at about 100 sites around the country, boosting the private company's revenues from \$250,000 in 1998 to \$3 million in 1999. And many more cancer care providers are expected to come on board next year when Intrinsic releases the latest version of IntelliDose.

"It is a pretty dramatic improvement," Intrinsic President and Chief Executive Officer John Connors said, adding that the newer version will have the ability to interact with patient records and other electronic databases that already exist at medical facilities.

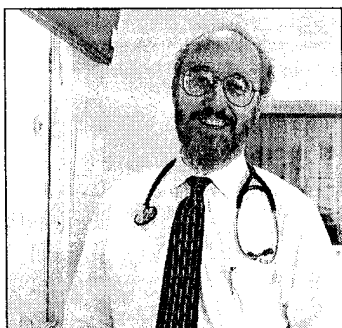
"The whole (medical) industry is just now getting down to standardization, and they are looking for the

Software

automate products with the best fea-

tures for every area," he said.

The impetus behind IntelliDose was a highly publicized chemotherapy dosing error at Dana Farber Cancer Institute, which killed a 39-year-old mother and Boston Globe health columnist, Betsy A.



STUART GARFIELD
PHOTO Dr. Walt Kagan is director of Commonwealth Hematology-Oncology of Quincy, which uses Intrinsic's Intellidose dosage control software.

Lehman, in 1994. The company was founded shortly afterward and began testing a basic software package in early 1996.

The death at Dana Farber also opened the eyes of cancer care providers like Commonwealth's Walt Kagan. Kagan began looking at what error-proofing tools were out there and soon signed up Commonwealth to become the key testing site for Intrinsic's new product.

"From the customer perspective,

With Intrinsic's software program, physicians enter all the characteristics of the patient and the chemotherapy regimen. A backup system automatically checks the patient's weight, diagnosis, treatment plan, allergies, and blood test results, and prevents giving the wrong dosage. It also provides an electronic report of the regimen, including specific instructions to nurses and other providers about when and how much drug to use.

"If the dose is only slightly higher, which is done sometimes, I can do that but it will warn me that the dose is high," Kagan said, describing how the software works. "But beyond a certain range, that which we would never give a patient, safeguards have been built in to prevent the order from ever being placed."

Despite the apparent need and safety provided by automated chemotherapy controls, the systems are still rare in cancer care. Kagan said the largest roadblocks are time and money. Most of these systems are expensive and require physicians to spend a great deal of time customizing them with their specific treatment protocols.

Commonwealth, for instance, spent months surveying its physicians to come up with a standard therapy regimen for

each cancer at different stages of disease progression.

"You don't get paid more by Blue Cross/Blue Shield for having these systems," Kagan said. "No one rewards you for the time and money spent on it."

Connors expects the upcoming version of the software, due out in January 2000, to attract more users since it can be with billing and patient records