

## Healing Mission, High-Tech Vision

IPC helps Dr. David Lanning and International Hospital for Children extend the reach of care through high-definition telemedicine.

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**D**r. David Lanning, a pediatric general surgeon practicing at both VCU Medical Center and Bon Secours St. Mary’s Hospital in Richmond, shares his time and his skills with the children of the Caribbean island chain of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. For the past three years, Lanning has volunteered for Richmond-based International Hospital for Children (IHC), a nonprofit humanitarian organization linking worldwide pediatric surgical, diagnostic and preventive resources to heal critically ill children in developing countries.

IPC Technologies is helping Lanning carry on his mission through the implementation of a videoconferencing system

connecting IHC’s headquarters with a hospital in St. Vincent. The system, from LifeSize Communications, allows him to perform patient consultations and screenings remotely, and to guide local physicians in St. Vincent through pediatric procedures and post-operative care.

“I travel to St. Vincent about one week a year to operate on kids. The thing that’s been troubling me is what happens to the kids when I leave,” Lanning said. “The adult surgeons there are skilled in their practices but don’t have the specialized training needed to treat kids with surgical problems.

“So I had the idea that we could use videoconferencing to help guide the local doctors through pediatric surgeries, as well

as help them with pre- and post-operative care. There are lots of ways we can use this technology to help care for kids in this impoverished country.”

## Detailed View

Lanning had heard about the LifeSize system and met with IPC’s videoconferencing specialists for a demonstration of the technology. Lanning liked what he saw. The LifeSize solution provides the high-definition images needed for effective telemedicine.

“High-quality images are obviously critical,” said Lanning, “and with the LifeSize system it’s almost as if you’re in the operating room assisting with the procedure. The system also allows us to view X-rays, CT scans, ultrasounds and other data in great detail. What’s more, we can do the pre-surgical consultations that enable us to schedule operations and bring needed equipment, maximizing our time during our weeklong visit.”

LifeSize provides a “telepresence” experience through true high-definition video resolution — 1280 x 720 pixels at 30 frames per second. Yet LifeSize is less expensive than legacy videoconferencing systems and requires a fraction of the bandwidth of comparable solutions.

“The cost was certainly a plus, and we like the idea of being able to utilize lower bandwidths to transmit the audio and video,” said Lanning. “Getting reliable Internet service in St. Vincent can be a challenge but in the first couple of months we were able to see kids in a clinical setting. I foresee that this system will have a major impact, and not just for the kids with general pediatric surgical problems. The other medical teams, such as orthopedic surgery, dermatology, ophthalmology and cardiology, will also be able to use the system in helping care for kids.”

## Looking to the Future

IPC helped to implement the system at IHC’s headquarters, then showed Lanning’s associate, Dr. Frank Margaron, how to install the second unit in St. Vincent. Margaron is spending a year of his general surgery residency assisting with the program in St. Vincent. He will fly to the island throughout the year to help ICH physicians take full advantage of the equipment.

“IPC showed Frank how to set it up and troubleshoot it, which enabled him to complete the installation by himself,” Lanning said.

Lanning plans to make his third trip to St. Vincent in January. But he hopes that the telemedicine program he helped to spearhead will provide needy children throughout the Caribbean with consistent access to pediatric specialists in the U.S.

“IHC has a long history of sponsoring trips for kids, bringing them up to Richmond from various countries for medical care as well as sending teams out to provide care locally. Telemedicine is another tool the organization can use to carry out its mission,” he said. “I hope that IHC will install more of these systems throughout their satellite countries. Combined with IHC’s other programs, telemedicine has the potential to transform the delivery of pediatric care in these nations.”



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