



What's New

Celebrate Nonprofits
 Graduation Focus 2003
 Reality Rites

Local News

- Nation & World**
- Sports**
- Business**
- Barney Brantingham**
- Editorials**
- Life**
- Obituaries**
- Travel**
- Weather**

Classified

- Calendar**
- Celebrations**
- Community**
- City Services & Government
- Community Services & Organizations
- Education
- Elected Representatives
- News-Press in the Community

News

- Features/Series**
- AMERICA AT WAR
- Special Report - Cold Cases
- Commuters' Nightmare
- Cost of Enlightenment
- North and South
- Reality Rites**
- The Shape We're In
- A Stranger in Paradise

Contact Us

- Advertising Information**
- Home Delivery**

Site Index

- 7-Day Search**
- Archives**
- Reprint Permission Forms**

Business News

InTouch with more Companions

Growing Goleta firm finds success with medical robots

7/11/03

By FRANK NELSON

NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER



Goleta-based InTouch Health is growing. The company has more funding, more space and is rolling out more commercial trials of its remotely controlled health-care

robot, the Companion.

Company founder, chairman and chief executive officer Yulun Wang said InTouch has just closed \$1 million funding with InvestCare Partners, a private health-care equity fund managed by Beringea, a Michigan-based venture capital firm.

Mr. Wang said the deal includes a commitment to future financing and he thinks the company may be looking for between another \$5 million and \$7 million next year.

The company's previous \$2.5 million funding was mostly raised in Santa Barbara, with major contributions from Digital Instruments founder Dr. Virgil Elings, his son Jeff and an investment company established by developer Michael Towbes.

The new funding comes on the heels of the company's expansion into four paying pilot sites around the country and the prospect of a fifth being added soon at the University of Southern Alabama.

The initial Companion, described as the "world's first



Marketplace

- Announcements
- Cars
- AutoMall
- Jobs
- Merchandise
- Open Houses Directory
- Personals
- Real Estate
- Rentals
- Santa Barbara Homes
- Services

Special Sections

- Business Outlook '03
- Careers Santa Barbara
- Celebrate Nonprofits**
- Chefs of Santa Barbara
- Home & Garden
- Reader's Choice
- Santa Barbara News-Press Coupons
- Weddings 2003
- Woman Magazine Online
- Youth Activity Guide

Entertainment

- Scene Online
- Art Scene
- Restaurant Guide
- Movies
- Music Scene
- Theater
- Horoscope
- Lottery
- Santa Barbara County
- Wine Guide
- TV Listings
- USA Weekend Online



Search by ticker symbol, abbreviation from your local newspaper or company name

- Ticker
- Abbreviation
- Company

Quick Quote

Go

mobile remote presence robot for healthcare," was installed at the Silverado senior living facility in Calabasas in January.

Last month, another was launched at Aspen Park, a Silverado assisted-living community in Salt Lake City, Utah, which specializes in caring for residents with Alzheimer's disease.

Other Companions, designed to enable health-care assessment, consultation, treatment and training from a distance, are rolling around an elderly care facility in Otterbein, Ohio, and at Johns Hopkins Hospital, in Baltimore.

Mr. Wang said the robots are being leased for around \$3,000 per month. Beyond the upcoming fifth pilot installation, he said several large partnership agreements are in the pipeline which could lead to Companions in about another 100 facilities.

The Companion enables a health-care professional, working from a high-tech console, to assess patients many miles away, looking at conditions varying from accident rehabilitation to wound care, and treating them accordingly.

InTouch Health believes its medical robots are helping solve the enormous problems caused by the convergence of a rapidly aging population, a shortage of health-care professionals and ballooning health budgets.

Using sophisticated software and a broadband wireless Internet connection, the Companion is proving its worth as an educational and training tool by linking doctors and nurses at different facilities.

The machine at Otterbein is also enabling the first long-distance socialization. In a move aimed at alleviating the depression that affects many nursing home residents, a woman in North Carolina, with a terminal in her home, is able to "visit" her mother's room and join her for meals.

Meanwhile, in the trial at Johns Hopkins Hospital, the Companion is making life easier for busy doctors on their rounds. With the potential to re-visit patients remotely, discharges can be handled more efficiently, freeing up beds and saving hospitals money.

InTouch Health recently moved from the Santa Barbara Technology Group, on Gutierrez Street, into about 8,000



Symbol	Last
CKR	6.800
DECK	6.990
ERTH	0.418
FNE	32.400
FNIS	27.090
GRKA	5.500
IMDC	57.030
MNTR	19.590
PCBC	34.800
QADI	8.510
SMRA	1.870
SCON	2.680
THC	11.850

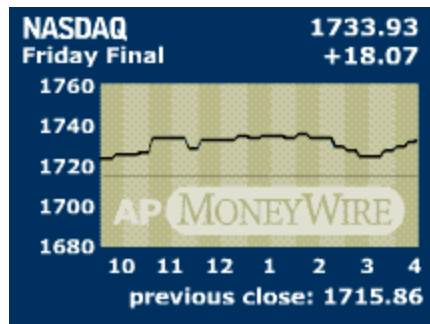
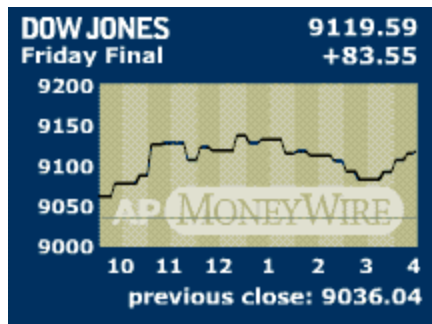


square feet of space on Castilian Drive in Goleta. "We have room to grow," said Mr. Wang.

The company now employs about 15 people and the new headquarters includes areas for engineering and design along with storage and additional office space.

Mr. Wang, who holds a Ph.D. in electrical engineering from UCSB and is regarded as a pioneer in the field of medicine-related robotics, was among the finalists for last month's World Technology Awards.

InTouch Health says his selection for the category "information technology -- hardware" puts Mr. Wang among the top five people in the world in his field and means his automatic election as a fellow of the London-based World Technology Network.



© Copyright 2003 Santa Barbara News-Press
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED