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## New service provides high-tech health alerts

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REGINA -- Soon parents of diabetic children or children of seniors with high blood pressure will be able to receive a text message alerting them of their loved ones' health problems.

"For the past three years at SaskTel, we've been working on a remote monitoring system for chronic disease management, so it's essentially telecommunications equipment with enabled medical devices like glucose meters and blood pressure meters," said Cameron Hutchings, SaskTel's marketing manager for LifeStat. "We actually send readings to a central Web site where we serve up that information for the entire care team."

LifeStat records and transfers daily blood glucose and blood pressure readings automatically to SaskTel's secure data centre. The data is accessible over any Internet connection to family members or health-care providers.

"It's just like logging in to online banking," Hutchings said. "You go to a Web site, you enter in your user name and password and that gets you in to see your bank of health data."

System users can customize alert settings to be sent via e-mail, text messages, fax or interactive voice response callout. The technology allows seniors to live independently and provides family members with peace of mind, Hutchings said.

"We've been working pretty diligently with the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation and it's a wonderful tool for parents monitoring kids at school because we actually transmit readings through a cell phone," he said.

"We've had various trials across Canada -- all the way from New Brunswick and Nova Scotia to B.C. This is being used currently in a number of health clinics and in a couple of pilot programs and trials."

The use of information technology to keep chronically ill patients healthy resulted in Hutchings being nominated for the Community IT Hero Award.

The IT Hero Awards program was developed in 2001 by the Information Technology Association of Canada (ITAC) in partnership with Industry Canada to celebrate and recognize the achievements of Canadians who use technology in innovative ways to help others.

SaskTel was urged to enter the contest by one of the nurses who worked with the corporation on the project. The awards banquet will be held in Toronto on

June 26.

Hutchings said that SaskTel is in the process of implementing the service in Saskatchewan now and the company is working on adding new services.

"In the future, we'll be able to monitor people with congestive heart failure and people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease," he said. "Those are probably a year away before they are a commercial offering."

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