

National to International Integration – Global Impact

For the Belgian-based Agfa-Gevaert Group, healthcare is the reason for their recent corporate growth year over year and more than 43% of their sales originate from the NAFTA region. Canada has not been a passive participant in their success.

It is no accident, then, that Agfa is on a path that integrates its operations with Canada's academic and industrial communities serving the healthcare sector.

Following a relatively passive relationship with academe and industry, Agfa recently acquired the Canadian company – Mitra Imaging Inc. This played an important role in the development and success of IMPAX, Agfa's digital network for hospitals. The investment is a direct reflection of Agfa's strategy to dominate the digital marketplace.

Medicalis technology gives doctors instant access to critical information, once housed in disparate databases, to streamline the diagnostic imaging process. This, company representatives say, should eliminate unnecessary MRIs, CT and PET scans, to diagnose illness. GE Medical Systems is a collaborator. Roll out will be in phases.

Mitra already had well-established ties to the University of Waterloo and was instrumental in supporting that university's 2001 launch of a new program in Applied Health Informatics. The program is taught via distance education, and is available to Health Informatics professionals throughout North America.

Continuing the Mitra tradition, Agfa is providing funds for a research chair in health informatics at the university. It sees the program's potential for global impact and has committed \$100,000 a year over five years.

Mitra in turn was responsible for the launch of Medicalis Corporation to serve a joint venture between Mitra and Brigham and Women's Hospital (BWH) – a teaching affiliate

of Harvard Medical School. Medicalis is commercializing evidence-based decision support solutions initially developed at Brigham and Women's. The Medicalis board includes Mitra, Agfa, Brigham and Women's and Harvard representation. Not bad company to keep.

Medicalis says that the success of companies like their's and Mitra can be attributed directly to Canada's healthcare system and its commitment to evidence-based practices. In the same breath they point to the considerable influence attributable to McMaster University in Hamilton.

For Mitra and Medicalis, the acquisition by Agfa provided important infrastructure to help commercialize new technology. Mitra and Medicalis Corporation entered into an agreement that saw technology and employees transferred from Mitra to Medicalis to accelerate the development of evidence-based clinical decision support solutions. Mitra, of course owns a stake in Medicalis, and Agfa owns Mitra.

Agfa stays close to other academic programs in Canada as well including those programs delivering technicians to the marketplace. This includes the Picture Archiving and Communication Systems (PACS) Graduate Program at the Michener Institute for Applied Sciences, The Michener is the first and only PACS program in Canada that offers hands-on and clinical experience. The program combines three online didactic courses with a four-week full-time clinical component at one of its three affiliated hospital sites

Management too has been given global responsibilities. In Canada, Michael Green, a Fellow of the Institute of Biomedical Sciences, manages the healthcare group. Michael arrived in 2001 as Vice President Healthcare, Agfa Canada. A year later he was appointed Head of Informatics Americas for Agfa-Gevaert – an additional assignment that also introduces his staff to global responsibilities.

Looks like what's good for Agfa is good for Canada and healthcare throughout the world.



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