

ROCHESTER'S RESOLVE: OUR FUTURE

Area firm helps to ID anthrax

**BY STAFF WRITER
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Doctors diagnosing a case of blisters that might be caused by anthrax could find help in a new software program and Internet service developed by a Rochester-area company.

Logical Images Inc. of Henrietta has collected thousands of pictures of rashes, lesions and blisters, turned them into digital images and cross-referenced them with symptoms, disease diagnoses and treatments.

In March, the company added a new module to VisualDx, its main program, that deals with fevers, rashes and bioterrorism.

"We have been working on this for more than two years and no one was really listening," said Dr. Arthur Papier, one of the founders of the company and a University of Rochester assistant professor of dermatology.

"It took the reality of bioterrorism for people to realize that we need better tools," he said.

To use the program, a doctor can type in information on a patient's condition, a description of the rash or blister and its location.

"Each time you put in a finding, it give you matches," Papier said.

"You are always viewing images as you're asking so you can see how close you are getting to what the patient has."

Many doctors have not seen the blisters and rashes that accompany the diseases of terror. The new program includes anthrax, smallpox, plague and tularemia plus about 100 other diseases such as Rocky Mountain spotted fever and lyme disease.

A recently completed study found that about 50 doctors who used the software program doubled the accuracy of their diagnoses when compared to using books as aides, Papier said.

"If doctors are going to be the early warning system, they are going to need a comprehensive tool," Papier said.

"Early identification can be life critical. It also can eliminate extra testing by helping

to get the right diagnosis so we don't overwhelm the system."

The Logical Images program was installed last month in the Strong Memorial Hospital emergency department. It also is being used by a family medicine practice in Iowa and several individual doctors, Papier said.

The company plans to offer the program free to a least two New York City hospitals, Papier said.

Company officials also are meeting with state and federal officials to discuss ways to get the program to more hospitals.

Dr. Lowell Goldsmith, former dean of the UR School of Medicine, and Papier started the company in 1995. Logical Images acquired exclusive rights to thousands of medical images from New York University.

Dr. Nancy Weyl is president of the company, which has six full-time employees.

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