



Database Helps Save Lives

A LIFE SAVING GOVERNMENT PROGRAM

Article by Sue Ashton-Davies

The NSW Cancer Council aims to save lives... to reduce the incidence of and mortality from preventable cervical cancer.

SSA-NAME3 used in the Fight Against Cervical Cancer

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David Schanzer,
Senior Systems Analyst, NSW
Cancer Council

For a million NSW women a Pap test is now a regular part of life thanks to NSW Cancer Council's award-winning database.

The Pap Test Register, which uses Sybase's database and Identity Systems name search technology for its backup reminder system, is a crucial part of that life-saving government program.

The Register, which was nominated for the prestigious Computerworld Smithsonian Awards Program, receives and processes information on more than 50,000 Pap tests every month, according to NSW Cancer Council, Senior Systems Analyst, David Schanzer.

“Its aim is to save lives by increasing the number of women having regular Pap tests and helping to ensure that women with cervical abnormalities receive timely follow-up care,” says David Schanzer. Constructed using Powerbuilder development tools, the systems automates communications between 54 laboratories, and maintains storage analysis of demographic information and test results.

In addition, the system also looks after the generation of reminders, and runs a range of quality assurance procedures on the data that checks for irregularities, ensuring that mandatory fields are filled in.

By receiving details of all Pap tests from laboratories and automatically linking them with previous tests, it provides a comprehensive test history for each woman.

It also acts as a safety net for women who have abnormalities by ensuring that their test results are sent to their doctor for follow-up care.

After 18 months, the Register is processing 13,500 tests per week.

SSA-NAME Evaluated and Purchased

The NSW Cancer Council evaluated and purchased SSA-NAME3 because of its ability to make a significant contribution to the process of linking a woman's test results with previous test records.



SSA-NAME3 was implemented into the PowerBuilder/Sybase system running on a DEC Alpha computer to assist with the processing of batches of test results and requests.

The system also supports on-line searches for ad-hoc queries from laboratories or practitioners, and for NSW Cancer Council operators to decide on suspect matches identified by the various processes.

The matching process proceeds through a number of search levels before a non-match condition is accepted.

A search by Lab Client ID and Previous Lab Accession Number (when available) provide a quick and mostly accurate way of finding the candidate, however, due to the possible error in numbers, Identity Systems matching on name, address, and DOB is also used to confirm the match.

An Identity Systems' full name search is used to find candidates when the Client ID or Accession Number is missing or wrong. The name search overcomes error and variation using negative keys with a positive search. The search proceeds as far as the two word level, but stops as soon as a match above the score threshold is found.

An Identity Systems Address search finds candidates where the names were different enough to escape the name search, and relies on name and DOB to confirm the match.

The last search on given names and DOB is there to find candidates where a woman has changed her family name and address.

The matching is done using the SSA-NAME Score service. The Secondary name feature is used to enable improved matching of neighbouring suburbs.

Achieving the highest levels of accuracy of matching a new test against the existing client database is critical, because pathology laboratories rely upon a woman's previous test history when screening her current test. It is also critical in ensuring that each woman on the Register is reminded to attend for subsequent cancer tests.

David Schanzer, Senior Systems Analyst for the NSW Cancer Council, stated "Given the highly variable quality of the data the Register receives from its 54 pathology laboratories, the quality of matches detected by the SSA-NAME3 software is impressive."

For more information about the Cancer Council, please visit www.nswcc.org.au

About Identity Systems

Identity Systems is the pioneer in enabling organizations to build and maintain high-quality identity data search and matching software solutions. Identity Systems develops and markets software products that significantly enhance an organization's ability to search, find, match, and group identity data within its computer systems and network databases.

Identity Systems has been in this area of specialization since 1986, and has over 500 clients worldwide who rely on its robust, enterprise-wide software. The Company has offices in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, and agents in other countries.

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Americas
+203-698 2399

EMEA
+44-118-944 9688

France
+33-1-4915 1515

Germany
+49-69-677 33 462

Australia & NZ
+61-2-9571 1300

Singapore
+65-6723 1620

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