Law School Gets Extension on Bonds

**FINANCE:** TJLS Trying To Restructure Its Debt

By MIKE ALLEN

Thomas Jefferson School of Law obtained another extension from bondholders to the end of this month to negotiate a new agreement following the school’s default in June on $133 million of outstanding debt. The law school, which opened a well-appointed, eight-story building in the Gaslamp Quarter in 2011, missed a $1 million monthly payment in June and negotiated a forbearance.

Cosmederm Itching to Take on the ‘Big Boys’

**MEDICINE:** Specialty Pharma Gets $50M to Support Drug

By BRITTANY MEILING

Cosmederm Bioscience Inc., a La Jolla-based specialty pharmaceutical company, has received a $50 million investment to help expand its TriCalm line — an over-the-counter steroid-free itch reliever that the company hopes will trump well-known competitors like over-the-counter hydrocortisone cream.

The investment comes from United Kingdom-based Woodford Investment Management.

Medicine Marketplace

**HEALTH:** The EMR Mandate Opens Door For Industry Innovations

By BRITTANY MEILING

A federal mandate requiring hospitals to install electronic medical record systems has not only streamlined the collection of patient information, it has opened up new markets for innovation in San Diego County and created a new field in health care.

Rick LeMoine, chief medical information officer for Sharp Healthcare, which employs 520 people in information systems, 70 of whom work in the new field of clinical informatics.

Numbers Adding Up for Abacus Data Systems

**TECHNOLOGY:** Big Growth In Legal Data Services

By MIKE ALLEN

Abacus Data Systems Inc. is seeing explosive growth in both its staffing and revenue this year, as more law firms adopt its private cloud platform that lets firms focus on legal services rather than managing their data systems.

The San Diego business founded in 1983 provides information technology management services tailored to law firms ranging from solo practitioners to larger firms with dozens of attorneys.

The business said it has more than 250,000 clients, many of which have shifted to its cloud platform that provides remote access, improves efficiencies and reduces costs.

Alessandra Lezama, Abacus’ chief executive officer, said because of the increased sales of its service, the company expanded its staff at its headquarters office in the University Towne

San Diego Business Journal
New Challenges, New Opportunities

The health care industry has been slow to install EMR systems for a number of reasons, say experts. Chief among them are concerns about patient confidentiality, the costs to install the systems and resistance from staff.

However, the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services launched an initiative in 2011 called “Meaningful Use” as part of health care reform that incentivizes hospitals to install EMR systems by awarding money to organizations that meet certain criteria. In short, the mandate demands providers show that they are meaningfully using their EMR systems to improve patient care.

Once the EMR system is installed and operating, the hospital must demonstrate that it is meeting federal standards for meaningful use each year to receive an incentive and avoid penalties.

Meaningful use has galvanized hospitals to go completely paperless, creating new jobs, new challenges and new business opportunities.

New Jobs

Sharp HealthCare entered the game much later than most hospitals, installing its first EMR system in 1984 and going paperless in 1985. The hospital system upgraded to a Cerner Corp. EMR in 2008. Cerner is one of the top two EMR providers in the country; the other is Epic Systems. Hospital EMR systems provided by companies like Epic and Cerner allow a lot of customization depending on the hospital’s operations, and require in-house maintenance not provided by EMR companies.

“There’s a lot of day-to-day things with a complex system like an EMR,” Lemoine said. “There’s always reports to be run for people, fine-tuning of some of the parameters, changes people would like to see.”

Of Sharp’s 16,000 employees, 520 now work in information systems. About 70 of those jobs are in the new field of clinical informatics.

This new demand at Sharp is typical of the growing career opportunities available in health care informatics, Mack said.

“The skill level for managing the old systems was quite low, you didn’t need a coder or a programmer,” Mack said.

Jonathan Mack of the University of San Diego’s Hahn School of Nursing and Health Science says the higher skill level required to manage new medical record keeping systems has led to improved work flows and more integrated operations.

“Now, all of a sudden, you have these complex electronic medical records and you have no staff that can manage them,” Mack said.

A clinical informaticist combines knowledge of health care, hospitals and computer science.

“This EMRs have to be integrated into the workflow,” Mack said. “That means you have to have a clinical informaticist that knows how to look at workflow and then build the screens.”

Learning to Share

Once hospitals have installed EMR systems, they face another challenge: sharing that information with each other.

“San Diego Health Connect is providing a solution and nearly every hospital in the county is on board. SDHC is a nonprofit association launched from the 2010 San Diego Beacon Grant awarded from the Office of the National Coordinator. The grant created a central hub that allows the electronic-exchange of patient information, such as test results, imaging data, allergy information, medications and medical care summaries. “(By using San Diego Health Connect,) if someone goes to the emergency room at UCSD and cannot communicate, the emergency department physician can instantly look at that patient’s records from Scripps, Sharp or any other San Diego-based doctor,” said Dan Chavez, executive director of SDHC. “The ED physician may then find out that the person is currently being treated for a chronic disease. This information might be critical for the ED physician to know, but unless patient records are shared between medical systems, that information may be overlooked during a precarious juncture in the delivery of care.”

Chavez said sharing medical records also prevents patients from paying for tests they’ve already completed at another health care institution. And he said San Diego Health Connect strictly adheres to the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, also known as HIPAA, which governs the release of medical records. A central hub for patient information opens opportunities outside of hospital systems, as well.

“The health information exchange is a unique place for startups to develop apps,” Mack said. “The gizmos that collect clinical data at home really don’t need to go to the hospital anymore; they can go to the information exchange instead.”

To date, the health information exchange in San Diego includes Kaiser Permanente, the Naval Medical Center, Rady Children’s Hospital San Diego, University of California, San Diego and Veteran’s Affairs. The exchange also has seven local hospital systems in testing, including Sharp Healthcare, Tri-City Medical Center, Palomar Health, Scripps Health, and 12 local clinics.

Clinical Informatics

Salary Information

$96,000

Average salary of Clinical Informatics

$55,000 - $119,000

Salary range of Clinical Informatics

Source: Indeed.com

From Your Chicago Title San Diego Team, Your Partners in Success

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