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Miami Children's pioneers use of new diagnostic tool in Florida

South Florida Business Journal - by [Brian Bandell](#)

Hospitals are places where even the smallest margin for error is unacceptable, so Miami Children's Hospital has added a program to help its doctors up with a virtual medical library at their fingertips.

The nonprofit started using the Web-based program by Washington, D.C.-based **Isabel Healthcare** in June. It guides doctors through patient visits while making suggestions from its massive database of medical literature and treatment guidelines.

Instead of relying on their memories and religiously reading all of the latest studies in their field, doctors can use Isabel to remind them of all the possibilities for treatments and update them on the latest discoveries.

The program is aimed at stopping misdiagnosis – a major problem in the U.S. health care system. A 2004 study of patient safety incidents by HealthGrades found that 15.5 percent of patients did not get diagnosed or treated in time by hospitals. It was the most common cause of a patient safety incident.

"The use of Isabel could reduce diagnostic omissions and the number of medical errors," said Dr. Deise Granado-Villar, chief medical officer at Miami Children's. "It goes above and beyond what our memories, as trained physicians, can recollect."

Miami Children's is the first hospital in Florida with Isabel. It's in about 30 hospitals across the United States, plus some doctors' offices, said Dr. Joseph Britto, CEO and co-founder of Isabel.

Isabel's origins

The company was founded in 1999. The idea started after Jason Maude brought his daughter Isabel to the emergency room in a **London hospital** where Britto was the attending physician. The girl was initially misdiagnosed and barely survived several months in the hospital. Yet, a medical study that could have identified her condition as a flesh-

eating virus and enabled her to be treated faster was available the whole time. Maude co-founded Isabel Healthcare with Britto to make sure doctors can quickly access such crucial information.

“We expect our doctors and nurses to read something and carry it around in their mind all the time,” Britto said. “You wouldn’t expect a financial analyst to carry the financial records of all **New York Stock Exchange** companies in their mind.”

Most medical search engines bring up research papers for diseases, rather than symptoms, or they are designed more for consumers than for doctors. Isabel is a constantly updated compilation of medical textbooks and journals. Doctors start by entering information about the patient’s characteristics, medical history and symptoms, and Isabel responds with a checklist of diagnoses to consider. Even rare conditions – often the most likely to be overlooked – are screened for.

Granado-Villar said Isabel gets the information within a few minutes, rather than the 20 to 30 minutes it takes most competing programs. While it doesn’t make decisions for physicians, she said it gives them all the information so they can make a better decision.

Britto declined to say how much Miami Children’s is paying for Isabel, but he said he charges 500-bed hospitals about \$125,000 a year for unlimited access. Miami Children’s has 275 beds.

“If it saves just one patient’s life or prevents one misdiagnosis, it will pay for itself for decades,” Britto said.

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