

French Guiana telemedicine network



In 2000, a partnership between the **Andrée Rosemon Hospital in Cayenne (CHAR)**, the **French Space Agency (CNES)** and the **Institute for Space Medicine and Physiology (MEDES)** led to an experiment in remote consultation via satellite being set up. The results proved successful, and French Guiana has now established an operational telemedicine network. **New services have gradually been added, and today it conducts approximately 2000 consultations a year and records 20,000 epidemiological declarations.**

This network is a historical reference for MEDES, but also more broadly for e-health. **It comprises 20 equipped health centres and 10 medical disciplines.** Today, this network is cited as a model for France's overseas *départements* and territories.



In 2000, French Guiana had few healthcare professionals or technical facilities, and limited means of telecommunications, with its major centres being accessible only by river or air. For populations in the *département's* interior, health care remained well below the services offered to urban dwellers.

To rectify this situation and facilitate access to specialists for isolated populations, the use of telemedicine was considered. An assessment experiment took place in French Guiana from December 2001 to May 2002, with the provision of a telemedicine kit.

Building on the success of this assessment, the system was implemented more fully and has been used routinely ever since.

It has been steadily improved and new features added.

Since 2004, in addition to the initial medical specialisations (i.e. parasitology, dermatology and cardiology), the system now offers ophthalmology, obstetrics and gynaecology, paediatrics, imaging (neurosurgery), diabetology, oncology and traumatology.

In 2006 and 2007, there were several new extensions to the network:

- * Installation of the epidemiological surveillance and activity monitoring module,
- * Creation of a gateway between the telemedicine server and the results server at the Cayenne Hospital Laboratory, which reduced transmission times and automated the sending of test results to the relevant health centre.
- * Extension of the network to health centres on the coast to avoid long journeys, especially in dermatology.
- * Establishment of a “community medicine-hospital” network involving private practitioners.