

1 June 2008

The TrendCare Story

Trend Care Systems Pty Ltd is an Australian software company owned by Cherrie Lowe and Ron Dunigan. By profession, Cherrie is a registered nurse and Ron is a system analyst. The product, 'TrendCare', is a software solution providing clinical decision support for healthcare facilities across Australia, New Zealand and Asia. The development of the TrendCare product began in the mid 1980's when Cherrie was a young nurse manager studying externally at the University of New England and working full time as well as raising a young family. During her studies she became interested in measuring the nursing hours required for care for a range of patient types such as; medical, surgical, paediatrics, midwifery and intensive care. This involved years of research and included hundreds of thousands of patient timing studies. The aim of the research was to identify key indicators that made nursing care more time consuming so that nursing rosters and nursing workloads could be more accurately determined for ward areas.



During this early research period Cherrie was working as a nurse manager in an Australian regional hospital. Using the research data, Cherrie developed a paper based system that determined the nursing hours required to provide inpatient care. She called this system 'Trend' as patient acuity and nursing hours were trended by the system. Working with the hospital accountant, Cherrie was able to enhance the functionality of the system by using a Lotus spreadsheet to do the calculations. The advantages of using Trend were recognised by Queensland public and private hospitals and many were keen to be involved in trialling the system. In 1993 Cherrie met Ron, a young programmer, who was working for an I.T. company in Cairns. Together they designed an advanced computerised version of the system. In response to demand this system was then implemented into an expanding scope of Australian hospitals.

In 1994 Cherrie was encouraged by her University Lecturer Professor Mary Courtney and Professor Barbara Hayes from James Cook University in North Queensland to present her research and product concepts at a World Nursing Informatics Conference in San Antonio, USA. Cherrie spent a month in the USA reviewing other nursing systems and realised that Trend, was in fact, more advanced and more user friendly than similar types of systems used in the USA.

By the end of 1996 an advanced version of the product was developed and this product was called 'TrendCare', as the concept of including patient care planning was now a focus. This version was adopted by private and public hospitals across Australia.

Both Cherrie and Ron worked full time in other jobs during the development of TrendCare with Cherrie accepting promotions that were offered to her as a result of the quality and efficiency outcomes realised through the use of the TrendCare system.

By 2000 TrendCare had been implemented into 40 Australian hospitals. Cherrie received the Award of Excellence from the Royal College of Nursing during this year for her contribution to nursing in Australia and was now Director of Nursing of Australia's largest private hospital.

In early 2000, New Zealand public and private hospitals began purchasing the system and in July 2000 Cherrie resigned from her Director of Nursing position to expand the business further into New Zealand and Asia. By 2005 TrendCare had been implemented into in excess of 100 Australian and New Zealand hospitals and three Thailand sites had successfully implemented the system. In January 2006, the National University Hospital in Singapore implemented a trial of the TrendCare system and went on to purchase the system in July 2006.

The reliability and validity of the TrendCare system has been tested and confirmed by doctoral students in Australian Universities. Dr Virginia Plummer completed her PhD study in 2006 through Monash University which validated TrendCare as an accurate system for measuring nursing care requirements in Australian, New Zealand and Asian hospitals.

A review of the TrendCare system by the Singapore Ministry of Health nursing representative Dr K. Premarani identified the advantages of using the TrendCare system as a resource planning tool. TrendCare was then implemented into all Ministry of Health hospitals by October 2007.

The Singapore project has been a real success for Singapore nursing services and Trend Care Systems. Nursing services in Singapore are now able to identify nursing requirements for all inpatient wards and can now redesign rosters to better match resources to patient needs. Nursing resources for the future can now be planned by using the evidence collected by the TrendCare system.



Trend Care has been able to expand its resources in relation to product development, research and clinical support, and intends to set up an Asian office in late 2008 in Singapore. Other Asian countries are now showing a strong interest in TrendCare as a result of the success in Singapore. Ms Diana Pang from Austrade Singapore has supported Trend Care Systems with their endeavour to expand their market share across Asia. Her support and guidance has been invaluable.

The TrendCare success story, according to company directors Cherrie and Ron, is due to the fact that the Trend Care team, a dynamic group of healthcare professionals, are experts in their field and are committed to the maintenance of a quality product and a high level of customer service. Trend Care has also been very careful to manage overhead costs and ensure that support strategies are included in the development of the program so that electronic support is efficient and effective.

TrendCare has fulfilled a real need in the healthcare industry and will continue to evolve and expand to better serve the needs of healthcare planners globally, today and into the future.



- i. May 2008 – TrendCare wins National ICT Exporter of the Year Award from the Australian Information Industry Association.*
- ii. May 2008 – TrendCare wins National iAward in e-health from the Australian Information Industry Association.*
- iii. April 2008 - TrendCare wins Queensland State iAward in e-Health from the Australian Information Industry Association.*
- iv. November 2007 – TrendCare wins the Freehills Breakthrough Award from the Australian Chamber of Commerce Singapore for outstanding performance by an Australian company.*

i and ii. ICT Exporter of the Year and National e-Health Awards.
Kerilee Cull (Office Manager) and Cherrie Lowe (CEO)



iii. e-Health iAward Qld



TrendCare – Cherrie Lowe, Kerilee Cull & Mons Yelland

iv. Freehills Breakthrough Award



*TrendCare – Cherrie Lowe & Chris Drysdale
KK Women’s and Children’s Hospital, Singapore
- Suhailin A Aziz*