

BlackBerry Customer Success Story



The Ministry of Health of the State of Yucatan (“The Ministry”) is a division of the State of Yucatan in Mexico. It runs 136 health care centers and 23 mobile units that provide timely medical services to the local population. The State of the Yucatan covers a large geographic area in Mexico and has many economically challenged communities that can be vulnerable in the event of an outbreak of infectious diseases.

The Challenge:

The first known cases of an infectious disease known as H1N1 were detected in Mexico in May 2009. Within a month, the virus had spread to various states in Mexico, including the Yucatan Peninsula. To help prevent an epidemic, the government declared a national state of emergency and instituted health measures throughout the country. Special attention was given to detecting and monitoring cases of H1N1 at the Yucatan Peninsula’s entry points, such as airports, seaports, roads and bus terminals.

“We urgently needed to create an epidemiological fence, but without a system that would allow us to identify and track people with influenza and prevent it from spreading further, this was virtually impossible,” said Dr. Julio Alfonso Góngora Escobedo, Planning Director to the Ministry. The Ministry previously used a manual process to detect and monitor epidemics, but this process had its limitations. Questionnaires and medical reports were completed by hand in the field, and then transferred to a computer where they were sent once a week to the Ministry’s main office by email. It often took up to seven days for information to arrive at the Ministry’s main office.

During the H1N1 outbreak, it became clear that the Ministry needed a better way to track and access information about new cases and exact locations of outbreaks, so it could more quickly deploy medical personnel to treat patients.

Industry:
Government

Region:
Latin America

Company Size:
Large Enterprise—
3,000 employees

Solution:
• BlackBerry® smartphones
• Vigilancia Epidemiológica
(Epidemic Surveillance) by
Cytron® Soluciones Móviles

The Solution:

In the midst of the crisis, the Ministry decided to deploy an epidemic monitoring app for BlackBerry smartphones called Vigilancia Epidemiológica (Epidemic Surveillance) by Cytron® Soluciones Móviles, a BlackBerry® Alliance Member. This custom application uses the built-in GPS capabilities of the BlackBerry smartphone to collect and pinpoint information about infections, and other epidemic-related information, from eight points of entry to the State of Yucatan. BlackBerry smartphones were given to frontline personnel such as field agents, members of the epidemic team, and agents of an international health unit, Sanidad Internacional, who monitor international travellers entering the Yucatan Peninsula.

Frontline personnel filled out a questionnaire designed by the Ministry, using the app on the BlackBerry smartphone and collected data on flu symptoms from as many people as they could who entered the State of the Yucatan. If the results of a questionnaire showed a probable case of H1N1, the data was automatically sent to the Ministry’s call center with GPS location tags that mapped the location of the individual. The team at the call center then conducted a follow-up questionnaire on the symptoms within the next three days – an important timeframe, as it reflects the incubation period of the H1N1 virus.

When a case of influenza was confirmed, a medical team was immediately deployed to treat the individual. “The BlackBerry solution

Mexican State Health Ministry Uses BlackBerry Solution to Help Control and Monitor Infectious Diseases

Key Benefits:

- Improved response time during an epidemic
- Better way to track and detect locations of confirmed cases of illness
- Faster deployment of medical staff to treat patients
- Better control of medical personnel and equipment costs
- Solution that can be used in future outbreaks of infectious diseases

“Thanks to our BlackBerry solution, we are better prepared to face almost any type of epidemic or health emergency. This helps us contain the spread of the flu and protect our population.”

~ Dr. Julio Alfonso Góngora Escobedo, Planning Director to the Ministry of Health of the State of Yucatan

allowed us to track the number and location of patients each day,” said Góngora. “The medical team could confirm new cases as they appeared and automatically update the status of patients, making it easier to monitor and contain the spread of the flu.”

Every day, this data was used to automatically map new, confirmed cases of H1N1 with distinctive colors on a large electronic dashboard at the Ministry. They could then more quickly deploy medical staff to the most critical areas. “If the signal was lost while information was being sent from a BlackBerry smartphone, the data was still stored in the device’s memory,” said Góngora. “The information was then transferred as soon as network service resumed.”

Ministry of Health of the State of Yucatan’s Benefits:

The BlackBerry solution helped the Ministry create an effective mobile process to help treat and contain the spread of H1N1 in the State of the Yucatan. In the midst of the H1N1 crisis, more than 8,000 questionnaires were completed using the BlackBerry solution. The solution helped efficiently locate people who showed symptoms of the virus and helped provide timely treatment to those carrying the virus to help avoid further infections. Better access to up-to-date information in almost real time also made it easier to inform patients and the Mexican population about the spread of the virus.

Because the application and the GPS functionalities of the BlackBerry smartphone worked so well, the Ministry had almost immediate access to information about people potentially carrying the virus.

They could better identify the areas of the State of the Yucatan most affected by H1N1, monitor the epidemic’s progress and keep better track of the status of those individuals who were potentially affected.

The Ministry was also able to expedite medical personnel to areas with confirmed cases of H1N1 for treatment. And since doctors were only sent when cases were confirmed, operating costs for medical staff and equipment were optimized.

Delays and outdated manual processes are now a thing of the past at the Ministry. Now, the Minister receives daily reports on a BlackBerry smartphone which advises if there is an outbreak threat. This new process can help enable decisions to be made faster. “When a crisis of this magnitude strikes, relying on the BlackBerry solution to provide almost immediate access to information is vital to take action,” said Góngora.

The application includes questionnaires designed to address other types of epidemics, such as dengue or cholera. As such, the BlackBerry Solution can be used across a variety of emergencies. “Thanks to our BlackBerry solution, we are better prepared to face almost any type of epidemic or health crisis. This helps us contain the spread of the flu and protect our population,” said Góngora.

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