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**Speedier registrations for hospitals**

PATIENTS WILL soon be able to register up to 30 times faster at hospitals and health centres across the island, thanks to technology that is about to make Jamaica the only country in the world with a fully computerised health information system.

The process started three years ago with a Patient Administrative System (PAS) which was installed in the Kingston Public Hospital (KPH), Cornwall Regional, St. Ann's Bay, May Pen and Mandeville hospitals. As of next month 18 more hospitals will be added to the PAS which keeps track of patient activities at the various hospitals.

In addition, about 300 health centres island-wide may soon become a part of the network that allows easy access to information.

Computerisation means that registration can be completed in about 26 seconds instead of the 720 seconds it now takes, said Ron Hebert, Chairman of Canadian-based Heron Technology Corporation which will provide the software and install the PAS system in the 18 additional hospitals and the health centres.

The system reduces the amount of time it takes to manually search for files, among other things, said Mr. Hebert who spoke at the Canadian Embassy Monday afternoon at the presentation of the plan.

This allows up to 175 persons to spend more time looking after patient needs instead of on administrative matters, he said.

KPH's Chief Executive Officer Errol Beckford, noted that the hospital had been able to deploy staff in other areas and even to hospitals that were short staffed, because the system allows for more effective registration and quicker retrieval of information.

Installation in the first set of hospitals amounted to US\$306,000. The cost of the new additions will amount to US\$1 million (\$42 million) to provide software, install the PAS and train staff. A further \$1 million is to spent on acquiring hardware.

The new installations are being carried out in two phases as part of the Health Services Rationalisation Project (HSRP) funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Jamaican Government.

The first phase involves transforming patient care systems in six hospitals during a four-month period, ending late next January. The second phase which will cover the remaining 12 hospitals begins in February and is slated to last six months, said Heron's Managing Director for the CARICOM region, Trevor Blair. He added that the company was considering adding the programme in about 300 health centres free of cost in the near future.

