

Satellite communications revolutionize Native health

Satellite communications that will revolutionize native health care in Alaska have begun, according to an announcement by Dr. Robert Fortune, director of the Alaska Native Medical Center.

An inaugural transmission on July 15th saw medical information from the medical center in Anchorage, transmitted by telephone to the earth station at Talkeetna and then to a satellite hovering over Alaska. The satellite, in turn, beamed the information to a hospital at St. Paul Island.

This is the first use of the system that will eventually see

120 earth stations transmitting and receiving data via satellite.

Approximately 70 earth stations are planned to be operative by the end of 1976. They will provide a 24-hour per day medical communications link between the village health aides, the physicians located in each regional "bush" hospital and the highly skilled medical specialists at the Alaska Native Medical Center.

Principal contractors in the program are the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) and the State of Alaska. The entire system is being developed within guidelines established by

the Federal Communications Commission.

The new system replaces an antiquated "hodge-podge" of high frequency radio communications that were regarded as inadequate and subject to changing transmission conditions.

The system will improve the speed and quality of native health care at a reduced cost, according to Dr. Fortune.

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