Niedner Appointed to Oversee “caBIG”

What does a physician have in common with a medical informatics expert? Very little, generally, but in this case are embodied in just one man. Meet Hannes Niedner, M.D., who began his career as a practicing clinician, and is now taking the lead for the Center's research informatics program, and the “cancer Biomedical Informatics Grid” (caBIG™) initiative. Sponsored by the NCI, caBIG™ is a national network enabling researchers, physicians and patients to share data and knowledge. Niedner embraces the mission of caBIG™ to develop a collaborative information network that accelerates the discovery of new approaches for the detection, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of cancer, ultimately improving patient outcomes.

As Resident Surgeon, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Bethanien Hospital Moers in Germany, Niedner was still delivering babies in 2000. But his eclectic interest in the life sciences and an innate talent for computing led him down an interesting path. In mid-2000, Niedner became a research fellow in the cancer pharmacology laboratory of Stephen B. Howell, M.D., Associate Director for Clinical Research of the Cancer Center. His research focused on molecular mechanisms that cause resistance to cisplatinum, a chemotherapeutic drug used to treat breast and ovarian cancer. Niedner utilized new research methods that produce hundreds of thousands of data points and thus needed to be evaluated with specialized computer programs.

This introduction into Bioinformatics (applying computational analysis to biological data) led to seven years in various positions at the San Diego Supercomputer Center, most recently as Technical Lead of the ‘Next