

Listen to your heart

Stamford firm works with 3M for a better stethoscope system

By Harold Davis
Special Correspondent

Use of a stethoscope to listen to a heartbeat hasn't changed much since the practice some 200 years ago, when Rene Laennec first developed it.

But Zargis Medical of Stamford and 3M Littmann hope to bring the stethoscope to the next generation through a global marketing alliance.

"We're not trying to replace the physicians, but help them make a better diagnosis and be more efficient," said John Kallassy, chief executive officer at Zargis Medical.

Zargis and 3M Littmann have agreed to develop a new digital stethoscope which will be compatible with Zargis' flagship product, Cardioscan, software used for heart analysis.

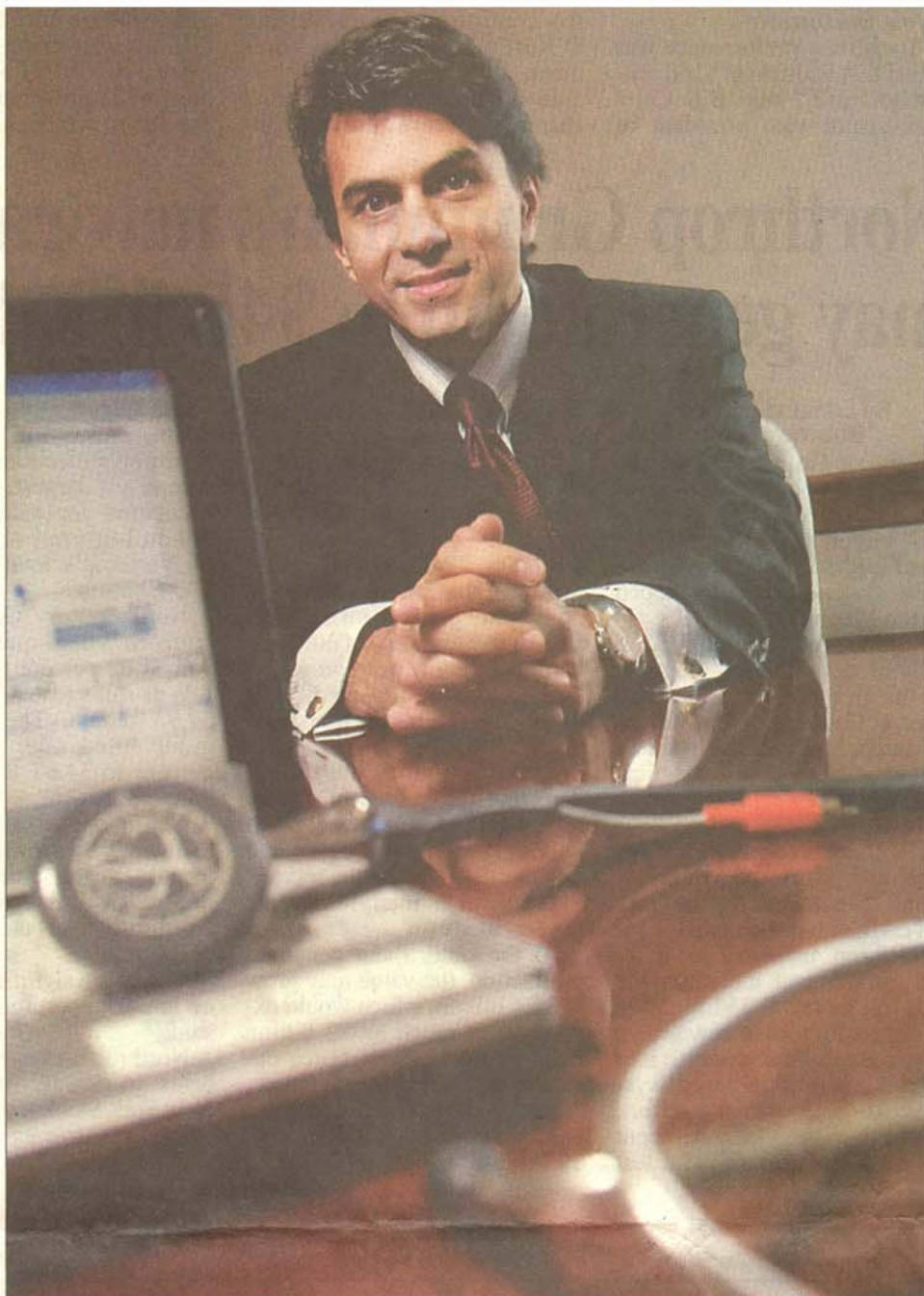
"We said if we wanted our product to be the global standard for computer-aided auscultation (a term for listening to the internal body sounds), we needed to work with a global standard in the stethoscope, and that was 3M Littmann," Kallassy said.

While the project is almost two years in the making and has received Food and Drug Administration authorization, the release date of the new stethoscope is being determined. The affiliation also offers Zargis the ability to sell its software through 3M Littmann's global distribution network.

Zargis Medical is a spinoff of Siemens Corporate Research that was founded in 2001 to focus on the Cardioscan technology developed by Dr. Raymond Watrous.

Kallassy got involved with Zargis because he was with Speedus Corp., an investment company that raised money for the spinoff. Speedus Corp. remains the majority owner.

If doctors are uncertain about the type of heart murmur, they refer a patient for an echocardiogram or to a cardiologist. Kallassy said there are some 9 million referrals for echocardiograms and an estimated \$2.5 billion spent for these refer-



Kathleen O'Rourke/Staff photo

John Kallassy, chief executive officer of Stamford-based Zargis Medical, with his company's Cardioscan system, which allows a physician to better diagnose a heart condition.

als annually.

A Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine study recently found that Cardioscan has improved physicians' ability to detect murmurs associated with heart disease by 46 percent.

Kallassy said he thinks physicians should make upgrades. He also believes the company will be able to make the software and stethoscope affordable.

"More importantly it is not just about saving money, but saving lives," said Kallassy, a Darien resident.

Marc Pruner of Web Counsel LLC in Stamford thinks the Zargis and 3M Litt-

mann synergy is an important one.

"This investment by 3M and the adoption of the Zargis technology is a real coup for them," he said. "It immediately makes them one of the major players in the field. It also takes all of the marketing medical experience that 3M has, along with Siemens, and makes for a very powerful combination."

Pruner added that he felt the joint venture will work well in the advancement of modern medicine.

"I also think this combination with help to move medicine forward significantly

Please see **HEART**, Page A10

Heart

■ Continued from Page A9

as doctors come to rely on this type of technology to help them expand on their natural senses where they are aided by the software," he said.

While there's still a lot of work to be done, Kallassy said the initial concentration will be the continued refinement of the 3M/Zargis product.

The company also is involved in telemedicine projects, where live satellite technology and the Internet can connect physicians with specialists when time is a key factor in saving a life, he said.

"We just delivered a prototype system to the U.S. Army. We also want to continue to develop Cardioscan to broaden our telemedicine tool and are looking to hire a chief technology officer to lead the growth of the technology," Kallassy said.

Zargis employs nine people between its Stamford location and research lab in Princeton, N.J.