

IBM offers to help fight bird flu

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U.S.-based computer giant IBM reportedly will offer its advanced technology and know-how to fight the spread of avian flu and other infectious diseases.

Plans by International Business Machines Corp., based in Armonk, N.Y., include making some of its advanced software technologies available to public health organizations and scientists around the world to help them more accurately predict and prepare for the potential spread of these diseases, the Wall Street Journal said.

IBM's modeling framework, called STEM, will combine electronic health information from hospitals with information from road maps, airline travel schedules, bird-migration routes and other epidemiological data.

STEM will help form a giant picture of how a flu pandemic might spread. The company said it plans to make the framework available as an open-source technology, meaning the larger public health community could use and update it regularly, the report said. Other plans by IBM include using supercomputers to model influenza viruses that could help predict mutations and to accelerate development of vaccines.

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