
RSNA Press Release

HL7 and IHE Renew Cooperation Agreement to Advance Interoperability

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ANN ARBOR, MI, USA — June 15, 2016 — Health Level Seven® International (HL7®) and Integrating the Healthcare Enterprise (IHE), citing a long history of successful collaboration, today announced that they have renewed their cooperation agreement to advance the goal of interoperability of health information.

"These two organizations have worked in complementary roles over more than 15 years and have been essential to advancing interoperability in health IT," said Michael J. McCoy, M.D., co-chair of the IHE International board. "HL7 is the leading developer of health IT standards, and IHE has put in place a process to help drive the adoption of standards by the health IT industry."

The joint statement of understanding provides for improved communication and coordination of schedules and projects to help expedite the development and adoption of the HL7 Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources (FHIR®) standard. IHE committees and participants provide frequent feedback based on IHE implementation and testing experience to relevant HL7 work groups. HL7 and IHE collaborate on testing events and public demonstrations. Additionally, many stakeholders in health IT participate in both organizations.

"We've recognized a need to impart more clarity about our mutual roles for the community and the marketplace," said HL7 International CEO Charles Jaffe, M.D., Ph.D. "With the development of FHIR, HL7 has introduced new processes that may seem to overlap with IHE. Therefore, we will seek to clarify how each organization uses terms such as profile and connectathon, and most importantly, the respective roles our organizations play."

[IHE profiles](#) describe specific clinical and operational interoperability use cases and document an implementation of existing standards to address them. They incorporate standards from many different standards organizations, including HL7, W3C, DICOM, CDISC, IEEE and others.

As a platform specification, FHIR is used in many different contexts in healthcare. FHIR profiles adapt the standard for specific uses and localizations, defining the resource elements and extensions, API features, terminologies and conformance rules for targeted implementation guides (IGs). HL7 intends for implementer communities, including IHE, to use the FHIR platform to create other IGs that use FHIR.

IHE committees have already published several profiles that reference FHIR, such as the

IHE Mobile Access to Health Documents (MHD) profile that extends health information exchange to mobile platforms. The MHD profile builds on the widely adopted IHE Cross-enterprise Document Sharing (XDS) profile for exchanging medical documents (notably documents based on the HL7 Clinical Document Architecture (CDA®) standards).

Similarly, to foster the rapid evolution and adoption of FHIR, HL7 FHIR connectathons visibly assess the readiness of FHIR resources, profiles and IGs among multiple stakeholders. One key innovation of the FHIR standard is its rapid development cycles, and FHIR connectathons are a prerequisite for resources and IGs progressing up the [FHIR Maturity Model](#).

Since 1999, IHE connectathons have provided supervised peer-to-peer testing of vendor systems for compliance with IHE profiles and are intended to speed the adoption of interoperability standards in commercially available health IT systems. IHE connectathons are currently conducted annually in North America, Europe, Japan, Korea and China.

To meet the challenge of FHIR's rapid publication and review cycles, both organizations are improving coordination of roadmaps and release plans so that IHE profiles can reference the latest available release of FHIR for IHE connectathon testing. Testing at IHE connectathons will help assess the maturity of FHIR resources, profiles and IGs. IHE's experience in implementing workable standards-based solutions for applications and healthcare enterprises can help refine FHIR and allow organizations to more confidently adopt FHIR to support applications to enhance interoperability. IHE MHD and three other IHE profiles based on FHIR were successfully tested at the IHE Europe Connectathon in April.

HL7 and IHE also agreed to seek opportunities to jointly promote education and the adoption of interoperability standards to the health IT community in events such as HIMSS17 in Orlando and eHealth Week in Europe.

About Health Level Seven International (HL7)

Founded in 1987, Health Level Seven International (www.HL7.org) is the global authority for healthcare information interoperability and standards with affiliates established in more than 30 countries. HL7 is a nonprofit, ANSI-accredited standards development organization dedicated to providing a comprehensive framework and related standards for the exchange, integration, sharing, and retrieval of electronic health information that supports clinical practice and the management, delivery and evaluation of health services. HL7's more than 1,600 members represent approximately 500 corporate members, which include more than 90 percent of the information systems vendors serving healthcare. HL7 collaborates with other standards developers and provider, payer, philanthropic and government agencies at the highest levels to ensure the development of comprehensive and reliable standards and successful interoperability efforts.

About Integrating the Healthcare Enterprise (IHE) International

IHE (<http://www.ihe.net>) started in 1998 with the mission of driving the adoption of standards for interoperability in health IT. With more than 175 member organizations, IHE International promotes the coordinated use of established standards such as HL7, W3C, DICOM, CDISC, IEEE and others to address specific clinical needs in support of optimal patient care. IHE national and regional deployment committees around the world hold testing events called IHE Connectathons that provide testing for HIT systems implementing

profiles. IHE has developed open source test tools, the Gazelle Platform, which is used to automate Connectathons and to support deployment testing and conformity assessment. Systems developed in accordance with IHE communicate with one another better, are easier to implement, and enable care providers to use information more effectively.

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