



OPEN HEALTH TOOLS

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Tri-Continental Foundation of Experts, Open Health Tools, to Collaborate on Global Health IT Solutions

- § **Common Health Interoperability Framework for improvements in patient quality of care, safety and access to health records**
- § **Collaboration between national healthcare and standards organizations, academia, vendors and open source community**
- § **First contribution of open source software from UK National Health Services**
- § **Based upon neutral, international standards and open source development models**
- § **Governance and business model similar to Eclipse Foundation software platform along with a set of exemplary tools and reference implementations**

AUSTRALIA, CANADA, UNITED KINGDOM, UNITED STATES –April 8, 2008–[Open Health Tools](#) (OHT) today announced a collaborative effort between national health agencies, government-funded organizations and agencies, major healthcare providers, international standards organizations and companies from Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States to develop common healthcare IT products and services. OHT's mission is to provide software tools and components that will accelerate the implementation of electronic health information interoperability platforms, which improve patient quality of care, safety and access to [electronic health records](#) (EHR).

OHT, with unprecedented resources, existing technology and expertise, provides a global community that will focus on the requirements, design and development of these enabling tools and components. The results will be available under an open source agreement so anyone may utilize them to provision interoperable healthcare platforms that will link clinics, hospitals, pharmacies and other points of care to make the healthcare system more efficient. OHT's health interoperability framework will utilize standardized, open interfaces and a set of reusable software components that can be assembled into systems and products by health systems and vendors.

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Skip McGaughey, executive director of OHT, noted, “Advancements in medical procedures and patient care have changed the way the world views health and wellness. However, modern healthcare information technology has not kept pace with the complexity of today’s healthcare systems. There is a critical need for interoperability between healthcare systems and the consistent and seamless exchange of accurate data.” Research points to a potential annual savings of \$77.8 billion in the United States alone from the introduction of healthcare information exchange and interoperability.¹

OHT is open to membership from any organization, subject to board approval. OHT’s governance, legal and intellectual property policies, development processes, and marketing and business practices are based on the [Eclipse](#) Foundation model. The results of member efforts are being made available under a commercially-friendly open source license. It is the objective of OHT that any individual, organization or hospital can build applications using the Foundation’s framework whether or not the entity is a member—free of charge.

OHT Inaugural Members

OHT is a collaborative organization comprised of the following standards organizations, academia, national health systems, the open source community, vendors and IT professionals:

Government agencies in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Australia striving to provide healthcare professionals with rapid access to accurate and complete patient information, enabling better decisions about treatment and diagnosis:

- § [Canada Health Infoway, Inc.](#)
- § [National e-Health Transition Authority](#) (Australia)
- § [National Health Service](#), Connecting for Health (United Kingdom)
- § [Veterans Health Administration](#) (United States)

Health standards agencies providing open, neutral, international standards for the effort:

- § [Health Level 7](#)
- § [Healthcare Services Specification Project](#)
- § [International Health Terminology Standards Development Organisation](#)
- § [Object Management Group](#)

Academia and research:

- § [Linkoping University](#)
- § [Oregon State University, Open Source Lab](#)
- § [Mohawk College](#)

Vendors and open source organizations providing compelling medical software, services and equipment solutions:

B2 International	BT	CollabNet
Eclipse	IBM	Innoopract
Inpriva	JP Systems	Kestral
NexJ Systems	Ocean Informatics	Oracle
Ozmosis	Palamida	Red Hat

The technical goal of OHT is to assemble and/or develop a comprehensive, harmonized tool suite to enable the definition, development and deployment of interoperable EHRs. The complexity of both modern IT platforms and the healthcare domain means that first-class tools are an absolute necessity.

Many of the founding members have entrusted key interoperability projects to be developed as Charter Projects under the OHT umbrella. The scope of the Charter Projects is intended to fulfill the technical goal of OHT to cover the lifecycle of EHRs in the broadest sense, including the development of standards, architectures, documentation and training, legacy systems, and so on. OHT technology will provide a platform with standard open interfaces together with reusable software components that can be assembled into patient-centered services and applications.

First Charter Project

As a condition of membership, individual organizations will take the lead on different components and will make major contributions of software and resources. For example, the NHS has contributed an XML processing engine and associated personnel and is leading the Health Level Seven ([HL7](#)) tools development project. HL7 is one of several American National Standards Institute (ANSI)–accredited Standards Developing Organizations (SDOs) operating in the healthcare arena. HL7’s domain is clinical and administrative data.

From the Founding Members

“BT is pleased to announce its membership in the Open Health Tools Foundation,” said Nick Booth, director of Health Informatics, BT Health. “Through involvement with NHS projects and its health IT integration experience, BT understands the value of open, interoperable health information standards. The challenges that exist in implementing such standards require new approaches. We believe that a convergent approach to the implementation of standards will bring several key benefits. It will directly improve patient care by delivering consistent patient information at the point of need; it will benefit the providers of patient care by maximizing the application of medical resources; it will benefit the health of the nation through a better understanding of the population's health needs; and it will benefit medicine itself through support of knowledge and evidence-based medicine. BT believes that open source software collaboration is the most cost-effective way of demonstrating and achieving convergence. We at BT look forward to an ongoing involvement with Open Health Tools.”

“The creation of world-class tools is critical to the development of robust Health IT solutions,” said Dennis Giokas, chief technology officer, Canada Health Infoway. “OHT will bring together global experts to collaborate on the development of tooling to support the development and testing of systems and their interoperability standards.”

“We are proud to be a part of the ground-breaking OHT initiative that is fundamentally changing how health organizations around the world cooperate and collaborate with one another,” said Martin Doettling, vice president, Corporate Marketing at CollabNet.

"CollabNet is committed to providing its world-class development platform and online community services to enable OHT's member organizations and distributed project teams to collaborate in an open and secure environment. The CollabNet platform with its secure Web-centric development environment, integrated issue-tracking, software configuration management, project management and extensive collaboration capabilities is a perfect fit for the vision of a global Health Information Exchange System where health organizations anywhere in the world are able to collaborate, share code and jointly develop software and new technology standards."

"OHT is an exciting example of organizations collaborating on new open source technology," said Mike Milinkovich, executive director of Eclipse. "OHT's decision to use the Eclipse platform demonstrates the flexibility and extensibility of the Eclipse technology. We are very happy to be a participant in this new initiative."

"Every day, lives are lost and people are at risk because of the lack of integrated and interoperable health-information networks, despite the existence of similar networks in almost every other industry. A pioneer in healthcare information technology, IBM is at the forefront of improving how healthcare organizations deliver efficient, high quality care. IBM shares the OHT vision that patients and their care providers must have access to vital, reliable and secure medical information," said Ciarán DellaFera, IBM distinguished engineer and CTO of Healthcare & Industry Software Standards for IBM Software Group. "Reaching this vision will require standardized services and information models that enable integration and semantic interoperability. We believe that collaborative open source communities like OHT are the key to driving the evolution of emerging health IT standards."

"The need to exchange patient health information across healthcare organization boundaries creates complex privacy challenges," said Don Jorgenson, CEO of Inpriva. "We expect that the availability of standards-based security/privacy components in the Open Health Tools framework will help accelerate deployment of interoperable healthcare systems and health information networks."

"The safe exchange of health information is critical for patients and health professionals," says Jennifer Zelmer, CEO of the International Health Terminology Standards Development Organization (IHTSDO). "By joining organizations from around the world in Open Health Tools, we hope to increase access to standards-based solutions that provide accurate and understandable health information to the appropriate people, when and where it is needed."

"The challenge for a standards development organization such as the IHTSDO is to encourage widespread adoption of its standards within the industry. Open Health Tools provides an opportunity to engage with the software development community to accelerate this uptake by developing open source tools and component libraries which meet their needs and those of IHTSDO Members," stated Karen Gibson, general manager of NEHTA, deputy chair of IHTSDO and chair of the IHTSDO Technical Committee.

"JP Systems is excited and honored to contribute to Open Health Tools," said Galen Mulrooney, vice president of JP Systems. "In the short term we see OHT as an opportunity to both lower the cost of ownership and increase the quality of healthcare-related software. In the long term, we envision that the OHT platform will engender entire new classes of software that are impossible to build today. OHT has the potential to have an enormous positive effect on healthcare."

The NHS in England, through the government agency [NHS Connecting for Health](#), is one of the founder members of OHT. Commenting on the launch, Ken Lunn, director of NHS Data Standards and Products, part of the NHS Connecting for Health Technology Office and a board member of OHT said, "Interoperability is a core aspect of the [National Programme for IT](#) and one of the enablers for safe and secure access to patient information whenever and wherever it is needed. The quality of patient care is dependent on the quality of the information that authorized healthcare professional can access."

Oregon State University president Ed Ray commented, "As a partner in the Open Health Tools initiative, Oregon State University is able to use its academic leadership in the open source movement to contribute globally to the enhancement of human health, the control of healthcare costs, and the delivery of safe, effective care. It is another terrific example of the power—and promise—of open source software."

"The absence of interoperable solutions in the healthcare industry has had a serious impact on the quality and cost of patient care," said Mark Tolliver, CEO of Palamida. "We are pleased to join with leading organizations whose goal is improving healthcare technology through worldwide collaboration and as a result making healthcare more effective and affordable."

"Healthcare IT can offer dramatic improvements in the safety and quality of care for patients. Red Hat is excited to apply the collaborative open source development model to healthcare and work together with leading organizations around the world to accelerate the adoption of healthcare IT across the continuum of care," said Paul Cormier, executive vice president, Worldwide Engineering at Red Hat.

About Open Health Tools

Open Health Tools is an open source community with a vision of enabling a ubiquitous ecosystem where members of the Health and IT professions can collaborate to build interoperable systems that enable patients and their professional healthcare providers to have access to vital and reliable medical information at the time and place it is needed.

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[1] Jan Walker, Eric Pan, Douglas Johnston, Julia Adler-Milstein, David W. Bates and Blackford Middleton, *The Value of Healthcare Information Exchange and Interoperability* Health Affairs, 19 January 2005, (<http://content.healthaffairs.org/cgi/content/full/hlthaff.w5.10/DC1>)

The URL for this announcement is located at: www.openhealthtools.org/news.htm