



- SERGE TAILLON, CIHI COLUMNIST -

Partnership for Health Information Standards - Building the Future on Success

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Since its inception five years ago, CIHI's Partnership for Health Information Standards has proven to be a successful merging point for key players from both the public and private sectors to discuss and promote standards for managing and exchanging health information. In the early days of health informatics, there were many opportunities within this forum for the standards community to learn about, influence and build consensus on national standards for health information.

CIHI demonstrated significant insight and leadership through the creation of the Partnership. Some of the early successes included the development of the Canadian Conceptual Health Data Model and Health Information Framework. While assuming a leadership role in the early development of standards, Partnership members learned how labour intensive standards development is and how much effort and commitment are involved. The Partnership succeeded in raising the profile of standards in this country and people's awareness that health informatics standards exist and that they are important. Moreover, it cannot be denied that the work of the Partnership did generate some attention for standards development, which resulted in funding for standards development initiatives now administered through CIHI.

The history of progressive achievements through the Partnership continues today. The strong sense of community among the Partnership members has been maintained. New opportunities are being created for networking with colleagues with common interests. And a recent review of the Partnership confirms the desire to cultivate the existing synergy within the Partnership—the energy, enthusiasm and sharing among people who have participated in the past.

Leadership is key to any healthy organization but during a time of change and innovation the right leader is an essential ingredient. The Partnership is fortunate to have as their current Chair, Dr. Kathryn J. Hannah.

Dr. Hannah has a personal passion for standards. As a senior health information management consultant specializing in information integration in health care environments, she draws her expertise from a wealth of both national and international experience. Dr. Hannah is an Adjunct Professor at Calgary University's Faculty of Medicine. She is Chair of the Informatics and Technology Working Group of Canadian Strategy for Cancer Control Project, member of the Board of Directors for the Canadian Society for International Health since 1999 (and currently Co-chair of this Society), as well as Chair of the Leadership Group of the Partnership.

She has been honoured for her contribution to health care informatics by election to the Fellowship in the American College

of Medical Informatics (November 1989) and with the title of *Maestro Illustre* (March 1993) by the Faculty of Medicine and Health Science at the University of Guadalajara, Mexico.

As one of the original members of the Partnership, she has participated over the years with both a corporate and personal commitment since its inception.

The Partnership's successes will provide a launching platform for its future. The original mandate of the Partnership was broad and somewhat abstract, the revitalized Partnership will be focused and specific. Recommendations emerging from the recent review place an increased emphasis on communications and marketing activities to increase awareness and participation.

New strategies will ensure that members continue to have access to the most current information about existing and anticipated standards in health informatics and health technology. Increased opportunities for networking will help facilitate a direct channel to communicate issues or problems about existing standards or the implementation of new standards. In this way, members can influence the direction of standards development both within Canada and also internationally. Development bodies will be encouraged to market or seek input on their standard through the Partnership or collaborate on projects as members.

The whole horizon around standards in Canada has changed since the Partnership first appeared on the scene. More and different players have entered the field. Federal, provincial and territorial governments are far more focused on using standards and are beginning to make significant investments in their development.

The Partnership's foundation has been built on a record of success and innovation. The future of the Partnership holds no less excitement and the long term potential will deliver benefit to Canadians, their health and their health system.

For more information about the Partnership and its upcoming conference, *Evolving Canadian Standards Landscape* (Vancouver, Oct. 31-Nov. 2, 2001), contact partnership@cihi.ca.



Dr. Kathryn J. Hannah, Chair of the Partnership Leaders Group and Adjunct Professor at the University of Calgary, Faculty of Medicine, Department of Community Health

