

Giovanni Vatieri

*Gio Vatieri is the Chair of CHITTA's Standards and Inter-Operability Committee and a Partner of the Healthcare Business Consulting Services, IBM Canada Ltd.*



## Meeting the Inter-operability, Standards and Integration Challenges – Are We There Yet?

No, but that isn't going to stop us from trying!

I plagiarized the title from a recent Insight Conference held in Toronto in late November where CHITTA was asked to provide its perspective on the question "Are we there yet?"

In an attempt to create some perspective on the complexity of the endeavour, the presentation likened the inter-operability challenge to a 'marathon' with the following parallels:

- The finish line was both an:
  - o ill-defined spectrum that stretched from full standardization striving for technical consistency to inter-operability that seemed more about functional compatibility and;
  - o even within a discreet point on the spectrum such as standardization, a collection of tools, frameworks and standards all striving to solve a unique dimension of the health information exchange dilemma
- The starting line would have a varied mix of runners (stakeholders) all of whom had, and with good reason, significantly different needs, biases and perspectives but, unlike a marathon which is run as an individual challenge, all desperately need each other to cross the finish line whether the user, investor, procurer, decision-maker, or beneficiary
- In a marathon, the runners would all be well equipped, would have trained to ensure they had a certain level of mental and physical capability, and had to make certain investments before ever getting to the starting line which is equally true of the inter-operability challenge whether it be the technology, capability availability, investment, governance, regulations, or change management
- Finally, marathon runners would have to contend with specific terrain, weather conditions, traffic, and any other risks much as the inter-operability challenge poses to our industry via:
  - o The differing mechanisms that standards are co-ordinated and managed across the globe
  - o The vastly different values, modus operandi, and

associated pressures brought about by the uniqueness of our healthcare systems; and

- o The demands we as consumers make based on our experiences in other industries which drive technologies that can easily leap-frog the current state of our information exchange challenges

So one would think that with an unclear destination, differing stakeholder needs, the inconsistency of available tools & capabilities, and constantly changing environments that the challenge is insurmountable!

As the voice of the Canadian Healthcare Information and Communications Technology industry, CHITTA, the Health Division of ITAC, is focused on promoting a cohesive, sustainable and responsible community, which facilitates the transformation of healthcare through the deployment of world-class, innovative solutions within Canada and abroad. Our guiding principles revolve around vibrancy, cohesion and responsibility and as such our members, through the efforts of our active volunteers, are committed to collaborating with other stakeholders to overcome the inter-operability challenge, notwithstanding its seeming daunting nature!

In early 2006, the CHITTA Board identified some key priorities which included the following:

**"On behalf of our members, take an active role in the collaborative development, adoption and implementation of national standards."**

To that end, the Board established a sub-committee structure which included the Standards & Inter-operability Committee (SIC). The SIC has, within the overall strategic priorities identified by the CHITTA Board on behalf of its members, articulated its priorities for 07/08. Given the importance of the standards agenda to the CHITTA membership and the pace of activity within the industry, the SIC has accelerated its efforts to address specific standards issues of relevance to the membership. The priority areas are:

1. Collaboration with Canada Health Infoway;
2. Participation in national and international standards activities; and
3. Advocacy and education related to standards

While the SIC is in the early stages of executing on this agenda, we have begun to make some headway. Our evolving approaches are as follows:

### **Collaboration with Canada Health Infoway**

The intent of this priority is to work with Infoway to facilitate direct and meaningful engagement with the vendor community on standards and related issues e.g. economic & product development, pricing & procurement, resourcing, and advocacy.

Specific areas of focus that will form the basis of the work with Infoway, include:

- An stronger alignment of agendas
- Increasing communications between the two organizations
- Focused collaboration
- Focus on establishing certain common standards
- Supportive advocacy on common issues

### **Participation in national and international standards activities**

The intent of this priority is to identify and participate in all the relevant ways in which CHITTA could engage with various standards-setting organizations in support of furthering the standards agenda on behalf of our members.

This can begin with an exercise in identifying the relevant vehicles available to CHITTA to expand our standards-related activities but should also include exploring how we can extend our current activities to make it more meaningful to our members (i.e. the Standards Collaborative). Given

the nature of standards activity, this would include an assessment of relevant international activity that can be leveraged for the benefit of our members.

### **Advocacy and education related to standards**

The intent of this priority is to develop a strategy for increasing awareness, knowledge, and commitment among our members on the value of standards. From this strategy, we could develop specific tools and processes that CHITTA would support.

The CHITTA SIC recently put out a call for participation to help drive and support this agenda to which it received a very positive response.

We have begun to execute more consistently on our communication agenda and have made available all relevant materials to our members such as meeting minutes, position papers, and documentation from activities where CHITTA is being represented such as the Standards Collaborative, provincial HISCs, international meetings or conferences, etc.

In the coming editions of HCIM&C, CHITTA's official journal, we will provide more detailed summaries of some of our specific activities and continue to measure our progress against our stated priorities. The SIC also encourages the members it represents to engage more actively so that we can focus on the issues of greatest concern to you.

On behalf of the CHITTA, we wish everyone a prosperous New Year for 2008.

For more details on any of the information discussed above or for contact information, please go to [www.chitta.ca](http://www.chitta.ca). ●

## **Board of Directors**

### **Chair**

**David Wattling, Managing Partner**  
Courtyard Group, Toronto, ON  
Tel: 416.349.2602  
[dave.wattling@courtyard-group.com](mailto:dave.wattling@courtyard-group.com)

### **Vice Chair**

**Ron Dunn, Vice President Sales**  
McKesson Canada, Grimsby, ON  
Tel: 905.309.3160  
[Ron.Dunn@McKesson.com](mailto:Ron.Dunn@McKesson.com)

### **Secretary**

**Dennis Niebergal, President & CEO**  
CLINICARE Corporation, Calgary, AB  
Tel: 403.259.2273  
[dniebergal@clinicare.com](mailto:dniebergal@clinicare.com)

### **Treasurer**

**Chuck LaFlèche, Founder & Chief Business Development Officer**  
Momentum Healthcare, Winnipeg, MB  
Tel: 204.235.2354  
[charles.lafleche@momentumhealthcare.com](mailto:charles.lafleche@momentumhealthcare.com)

### **Directors**

**Wolfgang Baun, Senior VP Healthcare Industry**  
EDS Canada

**John Breakey, Co-founder & CEO**  
UNIS LUMIN, Inc.

**Warren Brown, President**  
Procura

**Francois Gratton, Vice-President & General Manager Provider Solutions**  
Emergis

**David Mosher, Business Solutions Manager**  
Hewlett-Packard (Canada) Co

**Barry Rivelis, Vice President, Healthcare**  
TELUS

**Giovanni Vtieri, Partner, Global Business Solutions**  
IBM Canada

**Michael R. Whitt, Partner**  
Borden Ladner Gervais

### **Offices**

**Edmonton, AB**  
**Elaine Huesing, Vice President**  
Tel: 780.489.4574  
[info@chitta.ca](mailto:info@chitta.ca)

**Mississauga, ON**  
801-5090 Explorer Drive  
Mississauga, ON L4W 4T9  
Tel: 905.602.8345