



Advancing Interoperability at IHE 2010 North America Connectathon

Now in its 11th year, the Integrating the Healthcare Enterprise (IHE) 2010 North America Connectathon provides a detailed implementation and testing process to promote the adoption of standards-based interoperability.

CHICAGO (January 27, 2010) The healthcare IT industry's only large-scale interoperability testing event took place in Chicago, January 11-15. The annual IHE North America Connectathon tests HIT systems to foster compliance with standards, electronic health record system connectivity and interoperable exchange of patient health. Many of the capabilities tested at the Connectathon are closely aligned with the criteria for achieving "meaningful use" of electronic health records recently published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

This year's Connectathon brought together:

- 498 system engineers *testing*
- More than 150 health IT system *from*
- 104 participating companies and other organizations, including vendors, health information exchanges, government agencies and open source development groups

At the Hyatt Regency Hotel, engineers filled the hotel's convention center, performing compliance tests and exchanging information with complementary systems from other organizations. Each system was tested for successful performance of roles carefully defined by IHE profiles. IHE profiles are implementation guides for the use of established standards to address specific clinical use cases for information sharing.

Systems were tested from across the spectrum of care, including the following IHE domains:

- Cardiology
- IT Infrastructure
- Pathology
- Patient Care Coordination
- Patient Care Devices
- Quality, Research and Public Health
- Radiology

In each domain participants tested the ability of their systems to interoperate and exchange information in support of typical clinical scenarios. IHE profiles have provided the foundation for national EHR deployment standards and health information exchanges in the U.S., Canada and around the world.

"This year's Connectathon has allowed teams of vendors from around the world to teach and learn how to overcome HIT interoperability challenges," said Elliot Sloane, PhD, Associate Professor at the Drexel University Center for Healthcare Information Research and Policy and Co-Chair of the IHE International Board. "There is *no* more effective or efficient opportunity for vendors to work together to solve complex health data exchange issues anywhere on the planet!"

The testing was overseen by IHE's technical project management team and a cadre of more than 50 expert volunteer testing monitors. For each profile tested, the testing team develops detailed test plans and tools to validate conformance to IHE profiles. Monitors confirm the results of system-to-system tests

and record successful results. A total of 3763 successful tests were validated, up from 2684 tests at last year's event. The overall results of testing from all Connectathons are published in an online database available at www.ihe.net/connectathon/results.

"The recurring IHE Connectathon is a fundamental process to promote HIT interoperability," said David S. Mendelson, MD, Professor of Radiology and Chief of Clinical Informatics at Mt. Sinai Medical Center and Co-chair of the IHE International Board. "Effective sharing of health information will only be achieved by providing the community a forum to test their solutions and determine that they comply with accepted standards and are truly interoperable."

The Connectathon is mandatory preparation for upcoming Interoperability Showcase events, including the [Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society \(HIMSS\) 2010 Interoperability Showcase](#) on March 1-3 in Atlanta, Ga. during [HIMSS10](#). With 73 participating vendors and organizations, the HIMSS 2010 Interoperability Showcase illustrates how interoperability drives improvements in the quality, safety and efficiency of care. As in previous years, the Showcase highlights IHE's common framework and HITSP Interoperability Specifications for delivering interoperability across local, regional and national health information exchanges.

"The Connectathon is really a connectivity testing event. It demonstrates the ongoing commitment of the more than 100 participating organizations for the successful and secure exchange of patient health data through technology," said Joyce Sensmeier, MS, RN-BC, CPHIMS, FHIMSS, Vice President, Informatics, HIMSS. "Since its inception in 1999, the Connectathon has been a catalyst for a connected healthcare system, providing an opportunity for participants to test the interoperability of their systems with partners prior to taking products to their customer sites."

This year's event included a one-day conference featuring experts in the deployment of health IT and electronic health records. More than 120 attendees took part in the conference, which included guided tours of the Connectathon testing area. Presentations delivered at the conference are available at www.ihe.net/ihe_na_conf_2010.cfm.

Connectathon events are held annually in Asia, Europe and North America, including both broad-based events like the North American and European Connectathons and more focused events in domains such as Eye Care and Radiation Oncology. The technical management teams in each region collaborate on the development of testing tools and processes. The tools make possible coordination of event involving hundreds of systems and thousands of transaction. A new testing management tool, called Gazelle, will debut at the IHE Europe Connectathon, taking place in Bordeaux, France, April 12-16 (see http://www.ihe-europe.net/content/connectathon_2010.htm).

The North American Connectathon is hosted by IHE North America, a coalition of the IHE national deployment organizations, IHE USA and IHE Canada. IHE USA, whose current primary sponsors are Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS) and the Radiological Society of North America (RSNA) has hosted Connectathon events since 1999. The organization is presently in the process of forming a not-for-profit corporation. IHE Canada is an established non-profit organization whose sponsors include Canada Health Infoway and the Information Technology Association of Canada. The organizations work together to recruit participants to the Connectathon and develop the testing tools and testing team for the North American Connectathon.

In addition to IHE profiles, the North American Connectathon has become a venue for testing constructs defined by the Health Information Technology Standards Panel (HITSP), the organization created by the U.S. Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT (ONC) to harmonize health IT standards. HITSP Constructs specify how to integrate and constrain selected standards to meet the business needs of a Use Case. Many of the HITSP constructs are based on IHE profiles. The number of HITSP Constructs tested nearly doubled at this year's Connectathon to 43 constructs. Quality measures that will be a component of meaningful use were a key part of the HITSP product testing activity this year.

About IHE

IHE (www.ihe.net) is a global initiative, now in its eleventh year, that creates the framework for passing vital health information seamlessly – from application to application, system to system, and setting to setting – within and across healthcare enterprises. IHE brings together health information technology stakeholders to implement standards for communicating patient information efficiently throughout and among healthcare enterprises by developing a framework of interoperability. Because of its proven process of collaboration, demonstration and real world implementation of interoperable solutions, IHE is in a unique position to significantly accelerate the process for defining, testing, and implementing standards-based interoperability among electronic health record systems.