HL7 and IHTSDO Expand Collaborative Efforts
Up front coordination will bring significant improvements in global healthcare information interoperability and patient safety

Ann Arbor, MI, USA and Copenhagen, Denmark – July 7, 2011 – Health Level Seven® Inc. (HL7®), the global authority for interoperability and standards in health information technology, and the International Health Terminology Standards Development Organisation (IHTSDO®), the leading provider of standardized clinical terminology, today announced that they have expanded collaborative efforts that began in March 2009 with the signing of an official Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two organizations. The closer collaboration will foster healthcare information interoperability and lead to improvements in patient safety by further facilitating the use of IHTSDO standards with HL7 standards.

IHTSDO and HL7 are jointly working on a number of key global healthcare information technology standards initiatives, including the following:

- IHTSDO is making SNOMED CT codes and descriptions freely available for release in HL7 products, under a public good license, in order to improve semantic healthcare interoperability across countries and to improve patient safety. HL7 will use the codes and descriptions to produce a number of SNOMED-enabled products, using universal realm bindings to SNOMED CT where appropriate.
- HL7 is investigating use of the IHTSDO Workbench to maintain its vocabulary. Use of common tooling will improve harmonization, leading to benefits across the two organizations as well as for users of both standards.
- HL7 and IHTSDO are jointly reviewing and streamlining the request submissions process, to enable requests for additions and amendments to SNOMED CT codes to be made more effectively. Improvements are being made in both HL7’s internal processes, and also in IHTSDO’s request submission process. The latter should improve submission of requests from all standards development organizations (SDOs).
• IHTSDO has announced its support for the development of Release 2 of the Common Terminology Services standard (CTS2) by HL7 and OMG. This standard will provide a consistent interface into terminologies in EHR environments.

According to HL7 Board Chair Bob Dolin, MD, "Expanding on the coordination and collaborative efforts between HL7 and IHTSDO, these joint initiatives signify a major step toward the construction of globally applicable healthcare interoperability standards that will require far less realm-localization. HL7 is committed to working with IHTSDO and other standards bodies to advance the delivery of safe and effective patient care."

IHTSDO Chief Executive Officer Jan-Eric Slot said, "Making it easier to use HL7 standards with SNOMED CT will facilitate global standards-based healthcare implementations, where it will add the semantic dimension to interoperability." He continued, “The closer working relationship between these two leading organizations will improve the uptake and effectiveness of these jointly developed standards by members of both HL7 and IHTSDO."

About IHTSDO
The IHTSDO (International Health Terminology Standards Development Organisation) and its Members seek to improve the health of humankind by fostering the development and use of suitable standardized clinical terminologies, notably SNOMED CT, in order to support the safe, accurate, and effective exchange of health information. IHTSDO’s governance structure allows Members to control and guide the development of SNOMED CT, to ensure it meets both their joint needs and the specific needs of their individual countries. SNOMED Clinical Terms™ (SNOMED CT™) is a standardized terminology that can be used as the foundation for electronic health records and other applications. SNOMED CT contains more than 310,000 unique concepts and more than 1.3 million links or relationships between them that ensure that this information is captured consistently, accurately, and reliably across the health system. The terminology is in use in more than fifty countries around the world. SNOMED CT was originally created by the College of American Pathologists by combining SNOMED RT and a computer-based nomenclature and classification known as Clinical Terms Version 3, formerly known as Read Codes Version 3.

For more information: www.IHTSDO.org.

About Health Level Seven International (HL7)
Founded in 1987, Health Level Seven International is the global authority for healthcare information interoperability and standards with affiliates established in more than 30 countries. HL7 is a non-profit, 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 2,300 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.

HL7’s endeavors are sponsored, in part, by the support of its benefactors: Abbott; Accenture; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Duke Translational Medicine Institute; Epic; European Medicines Agency; the Food and Drug Administration; GE Healthcare Information Technologies; GlaxoSmithKline; IBM; Intel Corporation; InterSystems Corporation; Kaiser Permanente; Lockheed Martin; McKesson Provider Technology; Microsoft Corporation; NICTIZ National Healthcare; Novartis; Oracle Corporation; Partners HealthCare System, Inc.; Pfizer, Inc.; Philips Healthcare; Quest Diagnostics Inc.; Siemens Healthcare; Thomson Reuters; the U.S. Department of Defense, Military Health System; and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Numerous HL7 Affiliates have been established around the globe including Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, India, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Puerto Rico, Romania, Russia, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Turkey, United Kingdom, and Uruguay.

For more information, please visit: www.HL7.org

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