For Immediate Release

Health Level Seven International Publishes Implementation Guide to Extend HL7 Standard into Blood Banking

Ann Arbor, Michigan – February 8, 2012 – Health Level Seven® (HL7®) International, the global authority on standards for interoperability of health information technology with members in 55 countries, and America’s Blood Centers, a national association of independent community blood centers, today announced that HL7 has published an implementation guide to extend the HL7 standard used by many hospitals into the blood center environment.


The HL7 Orders and Observations Work Group approved the document during HL7’s 25th Annual Plenary and Working Group Meeting in September 2011. The blood banking specification implementation guide, informally called Blood Banking HL7 (BBHL7), was developed by a multidisciplinary project team headed by former Blood Systems CIO Jonathan Harber. The team was composed of standards experts, blood center IT and operations personnel, and representatives of blood establishment computer software (BECS) vendors.

“Everyone on the team should be justifiably proud of this accomplishment, and even more proud for completing it in such a short time,” said Mr. Harber. “We believe that this expansion of the HL7 standard will improve business operations and reduce cost for blood banks and their vendors.”

The blood banking specification should enable speedy and accurate data exchanges between blood center devices and systems, and eventually between blood centers and transfusion centers, thereby reducing transfusion errors and improving patient safety.

The HL7 standard is the most common data exchange standard used by hospitals and clinical laboratories. BBHL7 includes trigger events, message definitions, and data structures for the blood banking donor experience (donor registration, donor identification, mini-physical, medical history questionnaire, eligibility, phlebotomy, and product transport).

HL7 CTO John Quinn stated that “Implementation guides such as BBHL7 are a great example of HL7’s ability to create balloted and tested specifications that can be applied across multiple organizations without a need for each organization to have bilateral discussions about the details of IT systems’ interoperation. The goal of this guide is to provide an applicable specification that can be adopted as an industry standard, thereby eliminating the need for individual vendors to define anew the specifications of each donation service interface required.”

Some terms and definitions come directly from the HL7 standard used by hospitals and labs, while others came from the forerunner of the current project team. That effort began in 2000 and culminated with new hospital blood bank-related messages, segments, and trigger events, which were accepted in Version 2.5 of the HL7 Standard in 2002. This implementation guide is based on HL7 Version 2.6 with adoption of key
elements that have been developed by the HL7 Orders and Observation Work Group for Version 2.8, which is currently in ballot.

A background article also has been published on the HL7 International website at:

About the HL7 SIG
The HL7 SIG was organized by America’s Blood Centers, which also provides staff and marketing support. The SIG is composed of representatives from BBCS; BloodCenter of Wisconsin; Blood Systems; Carter BloodCare; Fenwal; Florida Blood Services; Group Health Cooperative; GPI; Haemonetics; Healthcare-ID; ICCBBA; ITSynergistics; Kaiser Permanente; Mediware; New York Blood Center; and Puget Sound Blood Center.

About 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; Allscripts; Booz Allen Hamilton; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Duke Translational Medicine Institute; Epic; European Medicines Agency; the Food and Drug Administration; GE Healthcare Information Technologies; GlaxoSmithKline; Hospital Corporation American (HCA); IBM; 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. For more information, please visit: www.HL7.org

About America’s Blood Centers
Founded in 1962, America’s Blood Centers is North America’s network of non-profit community blood centers. Recognized by the U.S. Congress for its trusted work in patient care, wartime support of the U.S. military, and disaster preparedness and response, the federation operates more than 600 donor centers that provide nearly half of the United States’ volunteer donor blood supply and all of Quebec, Canada’s blood supply. Each year, our members help save the lives of nearly 3 million patients at more than 3,500 hospitals and healthcare facilities across North America, while providing the highest level of blood safety through licensure by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and Health Canada. For more information, visit www.AmericasBlood.org.

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