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Electronic Health Records Developers Agree on Standards and Provide Direction to Achieve Interoperability

CHICAGO (June 28, 2011) -- The HIMSS Electronic Health Record Association (EHR Association), a collaboration of 46 EHR supplier companies, announced today the availability of a major new white paper "*Supporting a Robust Health Information Exchange Strategy with a Pragmatic Transport Framework*". The focused recommendations in the white paper, aimed at key health IT stakeholders, are based on proven standards and successful health information exchange (HIE) implementations around the world. The white paper represents the collective view of EHR Association member companies that support the majority of installed, operational EHRs in the US.

"These recommendations reduce work for providers, developers, and HIE organizations by building on existing standards to provide a strong foundation for the future and to spur innovation by connecting EHRs more quickly. By following this framework, true interoperability can be rapidly achieved as demonstrated by the work on data exchange that has been done over many years by such initiatives as Integrating the Healthcare Enterprise (IHE), the Nationwide Health Information Network (NwHIN) and, more recently, the Direct Project," said Charles Parisot, Manager, Architecture and Interoperability for GE Healthcare and chairman of the EHR Association Standards and Interoperability Workgroup. "We are pleased to present this significant work effort to health IT stakeholders for their consideration as HIE efforts ramp up to meet Stages 2 and 3 of the federal 'meaningful use' program," Parisot added.

"Although ONC has made progress on content standards, healthcare providers have an immediate need to begin exchanging data as they prepare for and implement meaningful use, healthcare payment reforms, quality management, and accountable care," commented Justin Barnes, Vice President at Greenway Medical and Chair Emeritus of the Association. "Particularly from the perspective of a company that serves the ambulatory market, we need practical solutions to these complex interoperability needs. EHR Association members are working to meet the needs of all practices, large and small, respecting the needs of solo practitioners as well as the demands of large medical groups and hospitals," Barnes concluded.

"This white paper concentrates on mechanisms for *actual* data exchange by presenting five use cases and related scenarios, as well as the currently available standards required to support them," added Charlie Jarvis, Vice President, Health Services and Government Relations at NextGen and Vice Chair of the EHR Association. The use cases are organized into a cohesive framework to simplify

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implementation and make deployment as flexible as possible. Each of the use cases and scenarios addresses protection of clinical context, provenance and patient privacy, interaction with other systems, and the use of metadata (i.e., data *about* healthcare data).

Jarvis noted, "The approach we recommend protects patient privacy and supports modern, internet-based XML protocols that can seamlessly connect providers and EHRs across the full spectrum of size and complexity. These standards also open up significant opportunities to create a more comprehensive connection to public health and other state-based initiatives, including immunization registries."

While recognizing that meaningful use Stage 1 standards and certification criteria do not specify data exchange methods to support HIE, the Association anticipates that the next stages of meaningful use will need to be more explicit on these requirements. The EHR Association is urging the HIT Policy Committee, the HIT Standards Committee, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), and the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT (ONC) to take advantage of this Transport Framework as a cohesive, practical interoperability roadmap for meaningful use Stage 2 and Stage 3.

"It's critical that we get these data exchange standards right and align to meet objectives for HIE in the US, as well as engage on a global basis toward international collaboration and consistency," added Parisot. "As we developed this consensus, we thought not only about care coordination, improved efficiencies in care delivery, and better outcomes, but also about data reuse, consumer engagement, and security and privacy protections."

The white paper, distributed to a variety of health IT stakeholder organizations and key individuals, is available on the EHR Association web site at www.himsssehra.org.

About the HIMSS EHR Association

The EHR Association is a trade association of 46 electronic health record (EHR) companies that join together to lead the health IT industry in the accelerated adoption of electronic health records in hospital and ambulatory care settings in the US. The Association provides a leadership forum for the EHR software provider community to speak with a unified voice relative to standards development, the EHR certification process, interoperability, performance and quality measures, and other EHR issues as they become subject to increasing government, insurance and provider-driven initiatives and requests. Membership is open to HIMSS Corporate Members companies that design, develop and market their own EHRs. The Association is a partner of the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS) and operates as an independent organizational unit within HIMSS. For more information, visit <http://www.himssEHRA.org>.

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