

## North American Medical Informatics (NAMI)

### Health Informatics in Canada

#### COACH: Canada's Health Informatics Association

[www.coachorg.com](http://www.coachorg.com)

Founded in 1975, COACH, Canada's Health Informatics Association is the organization focused on advancing the practice of health informatics in Canada. Representing a community of over 900 members, COACH is committed to a vision of *taking health informatics mainstream*. The Association's mandate is to promote the understanding and adoption of health informatics within the Canadian health system through professional development, advocacy and a strong, diverse membership. COACH is focusing on fulfilling this mandate through a number of key initiatives in addition to the continued enhancement of member services, all focused on providing the benefits of networking, information and knowledge sharing, conferences, education and advocacy that the members value. Having recently celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, COACH continues to develop significant and exciting initiatives to provide leadership in the evolution of health informatics as a profession in Canada. COACH continues, in conjunction with CIHI to host the largest annual e-Health conference in Canada and also co-hosts with CHITTA the annual Canadian Health Informatics Awards program that recognizes achievement and contribution in the health informatics community through eight different personal and company based awards.

Targeting the growth and responsible development of the profession of health

informatics COACH is addressing the need for professional credentialing through development of a health informatics definition and competency profiles. These competency profiles provide both a core view and specialist views for the many professionals involved in health informatics regardless of their entry point, whether that be through the technology or systems field, or as a health provider or as a health information manager or as a health administrator. To accompany those competency profiles COACH is socializing a set of high level ethical principles to guide the profession during this evolution. COACH has committed to a professionalism process that is collaborative and transparent, builds on existing knowledge and resources where possible, uses a "best practices" approach, is feasible and sustainable, and will be flexible enough to allow for future developments.

One of the key stakeholder groups actively involved in this and related capacity building initiatives is the Canadian health informatics academic community. An increasing number of programs providing health informatics undergraduate and graduate programs can be found in universities, colleges and technical schools across Canada. A new initiative will begin in 2007 with the Canadian Society for Telehealth (CST) where COACH has formed an alliance to further advance the integration of telehealth with the full e-health and electronic health records capability that is being rolled out across Canada.

COACH has long contributed to the development of standards for the protection of health information in Canada. Originally published in 1995, revised in 2001 and with the first online edition published in 2004 and now the latest version published in 2006, the *Guidelines for the Protection of Health Information* are a key resource for mem-

bers of the health informatics community. COACH continues its recently launched program to provide assistance to provincial and territorial jurisdictions across Canada charged with the implementation of privacy legislation. The COACH *Guidelines* provide a "best practices" approach beyond legislation which link to ISO standards and provide strategies for implementation. COACH provides health informatics professionals with the framework needed to minimize risk, maximize integrity and protect privacy for all personal health information. The 2006 version of the *Guidelines* reflects the current realities and evolving requirements of our industry as we prepare for widespread use of Electronic Health Records (EHR). The jurisdiction program provides for the purchase of a "licence" by a jurisdiction to use the content of the COACH *Guidelines* for the implementation of its own program through the development of policies, controls, resource information and training programs for all those responsible in that jurisdiction – employees, contractors, physicians, pharmacists, etc.

One of COACH's most successful programs is the annual e-Health Conference, held in partnership with CIHI, which attracts over 1,500 members of the health informatics community. This year's Conference, *Paths to Transformation*, will be held May 27th through 29th, 2007 in beautiful Quebec City, Quebec. This year's conference theme showcases an unprecedented number of e-health applications that are beginning to deliver on the expected benefits of improved patient outcomes, improved patient safety and improved cost effectiveness in the delivery of care. The program delivers a view into the many unparalleled advances in electronic health records across Canada. The Conference will provide understandings, experiences, and information on the



uses of the EHR, the EHR beyond clinical care, privacy, security, ethical and legal implications, e-enabled access, human factors and innovation and sustainability.

COACH continues to be an active participant in the development and implementation of international standards for health information as the key to electronic health record initiatives in Canada and worldwide. Many members of COACH are actively involved as volunteers in, and in several cases, chair working groups for the ISO Technical Committee 215 and HL7, such as Don Newsham (Past COACH President and current COACH CEO), Kathryn Hannah, Dr. Marion Lyver, Andrew Grant, Roger Girard, and Grant Gillis to name but a few. COACH is a primary source for experts contributing to standards development and appoints in conjunction with CHIMA, representatives to the strategic and coordinating governing councils of the Infoway Standards Collaborative of Canada. This Collaborative is the fully harmonized standards group in Canada covering all health informatics related standards development organizations including ISO TC215, HL7, Snomed and others. COACH is a strong expert source, advocate and partner in advancing health informatics standards in Canada.

The organization capacity of COACH is also growing in 2007 with the recent addition of the inaugural Chief Executive Officer. Don Newsham joined the administration of COACH in late 2006 and brings his 25 years of experience, expertise and networks from the health delivery, regional, government and private sectors and the international community. He is joined in this administration by a new association management firm, Base Consulting and Executive Director, Renee Levine. This additional capacity is fully focused on advancing the practice of health infor-

matics through enhanced services to members, a defined and understood profession, a well communicated and valued program, a growing advocacy capability and an effective, sustainable organization.

### Related Organizations

Canada Health Infoway

[www.infoway-inforoute.ca](http://www.infoway-inforoute.ca)

Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI)

[www.cihi.ca](http://www.cihi.ca)

Canadian Healthcare Information Technology Trade Association (CHITTA)

[www.chitta.ca](http://www.chitta.ca)

Canadian Nurses Informatics Association (CNIA)

[www.cnia.ca](http://www.cnia.ca)

Canadian Society of Telehealth (CST)

[www.cst-sct.org](http://www.cst-sct.org)

Canadian Health Information Management Association (CHIMA)

[www.chra.ca](http://www.chra.ca)

Canadian Medical Association

[www.cma.ca](http://www.cma.ca)

Canadian Healthcare Association

[www.cha.ca](http://www.cha.ca)

### Health Informatics Activities in the United States

#### Leaders shaping the future of biomedical and health informatics

The American Medical Informatics Association (AMIA) is the premier professional organization in the United States dedicated to the development and application of informatics in the support of patient care, public health, teaching, research, administration, and related policy. AMIA was founded in 1990 through the merger of three existing health informatics associations, the Symposium on Computer Applications in Medical Care (SCAMC), the American Association for Medical Sys-

tems and Informatics (AAMSI), and the American College of Medical Informatics (ACMI).

AMIA has more than 3,500 members from over 50 countries worldwide including individuals, institutions, and corporations. Together, these members represent all basic, applied and clinical interests in biomedical and health informatics. It is governed by a Board of Directors that includes 17 elected and 1 ex-officio members. The business of the association is conducted through the President and Chief Executive Officer, who works with the Board of Directors, standing and ad hoc committees, and 20 topic-oriented working groups.

AMIA holds two meetings per year – the Spring Congress in May, and the Annual Symposium in autumn. It publishes a scholarly journal, the *Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association*, proceedings of its Annual Symposium and Spring Congress, a monthly electronic newsletter and weekly digest of syndicated news within the field, *Medical Informatics News Bytes*, distributed to AMIA members. AMIA engages in public policy initiatives both on its own and works closely on advocacy issues with AHIMA, the premier association of 50,000 health information management professionals and other organizations. AMIA is the trusted source of knowledge about effective use of informatics to transform health care within three domains: clinical informatics (including healthcare, research and personal health management), public health and population informatics, and translational bioinformatics.

In 2005, the Board of Directors, members and AMIA staff undertook a strategic planning exercise to re-define the vision, mission and goals of the association. Two years later, AMIA has completed many the goals outlined in the



strategic plan, and continues work on new projects to advance health care with the development of educational offerings and programs, public policy and advocacy initiatives, scientific meetings and symposia, white papers and reports, and ongoing membership activities.

**AMIA 2007 Annual Symposium  
Biomedical and Health Informatics: From  
Foundations to Applications to Policy  
November 10 – 14, 2007 · Sheraton  
Chicago Hotel & Towers · Chicago, IL**

The AMIA 2007 Annual Symposium, the premier scientific meeting for new research and development in biomedical and health informatics, will be held November 10-14, 2007, in Chicago, IL. It is the place to hear about leading edge scientific work, to learn about evolving standards and policies for management of biomedical information, and to understand how cutting-edge technologies can best be developed and deployed.

The AMIA Annual Symposium provides a wide range of formats for education and discussion. Papers and posters present state-of-the-art scientific and technical work. Demonstrations allow for a more comprehensive exploration of working systems. An important variation on this theme is the Partnerships in Innovation format which showcases innovative uses of commercial systems. Invited plenary and semi-plenary panels, and workshops bring together thought leaders for in-depth education and active exchange with the audience about critical issues of the day. The spectrum of topics includes basic information science, knowledge modeling, technology applications, design strategies, health information exchange and communication, public policy, regional and international developments, standards, bioinformatics and genomics, and more.

**2007 AMIA Spring Congress Informatics  
Across the Spectrum  
May 22-24, 2007 · Walt Disney World Swan  
and Dolphin · Orlando, FL**

AMIA held a very successful Spring Congress in Orlando, Florida, that brought together informatics professionals from across the spectrum of the discipline. An outstanding array of thought leaders, experts, and innovators delivered presentations in plenary, semi-plenary, and interactive breakout sessions detailing work, progress, and challenges related to five thematic tracks in Clinical Decision Support, Nursing Informatics, Personal Health Records, Public Health Informatics, and Translational Research Informatics. There were also two successful poster sessions in which authors presented research and applied methodologies and results in issues revolving around the five tracks.

AMIA members and friends alike gathered together to network among their peers and colleagues, and attend sessions on a broad array of topics addressing multidisciplinary perspectives across the continuum of care. Along with all these great events, over 80 10x10 students were in attendance after successfully completing their coursework and gaining competencies that will enable them to serve as champions in their local hospitals, outpatient offices and clinics, and other health care settings to provide relevant informatics input into health information technology projects. Google VP, Adam Bosworth delivered the keynote at the Opening Session and outlined what consumers should expect from the health care system over the next decade. A post-conference summary and materials are available at the AMIA web site at: [www.amia.org](http://www.amia.org)

**JAMIA – the Journal of the American  
Medical Informatics Association**

AMIA's bimonthly journal, JAMIA, presents peer-reviewed articles that assist physicians, informaticians, scientists, nurses, and other health care professionals develop and apply medical informatics to patient care, teaching, research, and health care administration. JAMIA has rapidly established a reputation for presenting high-quality, cutting-edge information. Each issue contains state-of-the-art reviews, discussion forums, and invited editorials presented as brief reviews or full-length papers. A variety of formats accommodates work at all stages, from model formulation through definitive studies. In 2005, JAMIA received the top impact factor of the year from the Thomson Institute for Scientific Information. JAMIA is the #1 journal in our field again, by a wider margin than in the past. Its impact factor is now 4.3, higher than it has ever been before.

**Contact information**

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