

December 1, 2008
Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

Launch of Biennial Advanced Health Informatics Conference in Canada

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada -- The National Institutes of Health Informatics (NIHI) and the University of Alberta announced today the launching of a biennial Advanced Health Informatics Conference (AHIC), to be offered for the first time in the spring of 2010.

The conference will complement the Information Technology and Communications in Health Conference, offered in alternate years by the University of Victoria in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. The Advanced Health Informatics Conference will, together with the Victoria conference give researchers and educators in Canada, an annual—rather than biannual—opportunity to present their research and education-related contributions. A regular occasion for presenting, learning about, and discussing advanced topics and creating new collaborations is crucial for the maturation of health informatics in Canada.

The inaugural AHIC will be a joint initiative of the University of Alberta and the National Institutes of Health Informatics and will be hosted at the University of Alberta campus in Edmonton, Alta. The conference will have three primary themes: progress in health informatics research, advances in health informatics education, and new developments in evidence-based e-health policy development and implementation. These themes will provide a forum for researchers and educators with a variety of interests to showcase their advanced contributions to health informatics research and education. All presentations at AHIC will be peer-reviewed by independent panels of researchers and educators to ensure a high quality program.

“The coordination of these conferences is important,” said Dr. Nicola Shaw, research chair of health informatics at the University of Alberta and a member of the Board of Directors of NIHI. “Until recently, academics in Canada had no regular opportunity to have their papers peer reviewed and presented in Canada. The ITCH conference partially filled this gap but now we will have an annual stage on which to present our results.”

Dominic Covvey, director of NIHI, said, “I have wished for many years that health informatics researchers and educators in Canada would be able to present their advanced work in Canada rather than having to travel to the U.S. or elsewhere. Although there have been episodic opportunities to do this, it has taken until now for this wish to come true. NIHI will make whatever effort necessary to bring AHIC into alignment with ITCH and to deliver an annual opportunity in Canada for our educators and researchers to present their best work.”

After its initial launch in Edmonton, the conference will rotate geographically across the country to allow for the maximum of participation throughout Canada, with the second occurrence planned for Ontario in 2012.

Details of the conference and a description of options for sponsorship will be provided on request by contacting Shirley Fenton, Director of NIHI, at 1-800-860-7901.

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The University of Alberta in Edmonton is one of the top 100 teaching and research universities in the world serving some 37,000 students with more than 13,000 faculty and staff. Founded a century ago, the university has an annual budget in excess of \$1 billion and attracts more than \$480 million in external research funding. It offers close to 400 undergraduate, graduate and professional programs in 18 faculties. It is renowned for the Edmonton Protocol diabetes treatment breakthrough, cutting-edge artificial intelligence, machine learning, health law and policy and computer-based clinical education.

NIHI is a national institute dedicated to stimulating and facilitating the development of groups, centers and institutes focused on Health Informatics research and education in Canada. NIHI's means of accomplishing this include the convening of conferences, symposia, workshops and think-tank sessions; the sponsorship of a Canada-wide academic forum that unites health informatics teachers and researchers in Canada; the offering of the Applied Health Informatics Bootcamp intended to interest students in health informatics, and the provision of advisory services to assist individuals and groups to develop organized approaches to addressing the need for health informatics research and education.