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Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

## The National Institutes of Health Informatics is Launched

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada -- The National Institutes of Health Informatics (NIHI), Canada's first national organization dedicated to fostering Health Informatics (HI) research and education, has been established. Key details of NIHI can be found on its website: [www.nihi.ca](http://www.nihi.ca).

Information and communications systems have been used in health organizations for over 50 years. "e-Health" is increasingly used to address processes from the routine to the clinically-critical. However, we still have a long way to go in terms of Health Informatics research and the development of fully competent people to plan, select, implement, manage and evaluate systems and methods used in health.

The need for research and education in Health Informatics is even more important now than at the start of the computer revolution. Today we find ourselves far less limited by technology but we are still impaired by our ideas, knowledge, understanding and skills in addressing the human impacts of systems.

NIHI is a virtual, self-sustaining institute of institutes facilitating the development of a diversity of local initiatives dedicated to HI research and education. NIHI does not promote its own research and it is not an educational organization, but rather it will be a catalyst, fostering and facilitating research and education at its component entities.

The objectives of NIHI are to: (1) Assist in the identification and development of groups, centers and institutes dedicated to Health Informatics research and education; (2) Promote academic collaboration, credibility and professionalism in Health Informatics; (3) Facilitate the development, maintenance and renewal of the human and physical resources that can support the Canadian health system; (4) Foster the expansion of the knowledge base in Health Informatics and associated disciplines in order to enhance the well being of Canadians; (5) Enhance the Health Informatics profile of Canada globally; and (6) Exemplify and promote the highest level of excellence, integrity, and accountability in the pursuit of these objectives.

Today, Health Informatics research in Canada is widely geographically dispersed. Centers of excellence exist in specialty areas, but the greatest strength and profile would be derived from uniting these centers of excellence and integrating their endeavors in national-scale projects. The virtual union of these organizations will have the multidisciplinary diversity and capacity to address problems of national and international significance and to attract major funding.

Initially, NIHI has focused on bringing HI academics together. NIHI has been launched with the participation of researchers and teachers from most of the universities and colleges with existing or incipient HI education or research programs. Current participants and founding members can be found on the NIHI website. NIHI has evolved from the concepts on which the Waterloo Institute of Health Informatics Research was founded. Ultimately, though, NIHI will go in directions determined by its participants, powered by their enthusiasm and commitments.

Over the next several months the opportunity to participate will be expanded to include students, health system professionals, and individuals from the private sector organizations, government and other agencies that serve the health system. NIHI is interested in hearing from anyone in the HI community interested in participating and contributing. If you are interested or have questions about collaborating with NIHI, please let us know via: [www.nihi.ca/Contact.php](http://www.nihi.ca/Contact.php).

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*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.*