

Message from the Directors - March 2003

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openEHR provides a rigorous framework for structuring and communicating records of health and health care delivery, based on clear principles and evolving requirements for quality and governance. That is its unique selling point.

The *openEHR* community is developing well. We now have around three hundred participants on our discussion lists, over half of whom have so far registered formally through the membership section of our web site. The rate of growth is extremely rapid. An indication that *openEHR* has struck a chord is that a Google search now throws up more than 1750 references!

Because we believe that the concept of *openEHR* can only be evolved and delivered from the ground, as an open, not for profit, sharing of concepts, tools and expertise, it is inevitable that the resources to accelerate progress will only come slowly. That said, we are encouraged by the range of active commercial groups already looking to use *openEHR* within new products.

So we are building incrementally and there is much to be pleased about.

- There is a core group of highly dedicated members, working to make the *openEHR* concept a practical reality.
- We have a web site with a growing body of materials and thriving discussion lists.
- UCL and Ocean Informatics have established a legal framework, including trademarking, to enable one common home of the IP which is *openEHR*. Open-source licensing for use of the *openEHR* architecture, tools and specifications will commence soon.
- A consultative board is being created to provide the framework for rigorous change management.
- A first official release of specifications for a health record server, *openEHR* v0.9, based on early implementation experience in the UK and Australia, is near to finalisation.

openEHR thinking is already permeating the health sector at many levels, in many countries:

- It is being taken seriously by suppliers, new and old, and other health-related agencies.
- It is seen by many as key to the delivery of clinical interoperability of records and information services.
- It is providing important input to standards making activities of CEN, HL7 and ISO, where *openEHR* members hold important leadership roles

Having created a framework of collaboration, we must show by example that an architecture explicitly centred on clinical and ethico-legal requirements, delivering clinical and technical interoperability can work sustainably for users and deliver real benefits to patients and health care communities. That means that a growing mission of *openEHR* will be as an editorial body for validated protocols of shared care record management, based on the *openEHR* archetype methodology which is the key innovation that the founding *openEHR* members have brought to the field.

Technical specifications provided by *openEHR* must be tight and well-managed. Above all, we must stay true to our principle of speaking only from implementation experience and on the basis of evidence. We must retain a clear sense of learning about standards and standards processes, fit for their purposes. This distinguishes us from a standards body whose job is done once the standard is published. *openEHR* will help knit together conceptual thinkers and practical innovators and implementers. It must be clear and absolutely simple and straightforward in its approach, sharing openly and evolving with the needs of the communities it serves.