

Group Seeks Interoperable Home Health

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(September 12, 2007) An alliance of technology companies formed in the summer of 2006 to facilitate interoperability among home health devices, consumer health devices and health information systems is getting ready to unveil its initial guidelines.

The Continua Health Alliance now comprises 133 companies and expects in early 2008 to release its first set of guidelines. The guidelines will outline how to use four initial standards to achieve out-of-the-box interoperability, says Dave Whitlinger, chair of the alliance.

The goal is to improve chronic disease management by enabling home-bound patients using blood glucose testers, blood pressure monitors, pulse oximeters, weight scales and other vital signs monitors to easily share information with clinicians. Diet and fitness conscious individuals, the alliance envisions, will be able to share their weight and exercise data with fitness consultants. Data transmission and other communication can be completed via telephone lines, cell phones, personal computers, TV set top boxes and other devices.

The initial data standards the alliance is using include:

- * The Bluetooth Medical Device Profile Specification, with final ballot approval by developers expected this year;
- * The USB Personal Health Device Specification;
- * The Health Level Seven clinical messaging standards; and
- * The ISO/IEEE 11073 Personal Health Device Specifications, with final ballot approval by developers expected this year. These specifications are a dramatically simplified version of the existing IEEE 1073 standard for medical devices.

Several vendors already are testing prototype devices with each other, Whitlinger says. More information is available at continuaalliance.org.