

The Publisher Reports



Information and Management Systems Society

The 2003 Annual HIMSS Conference and Exhibition, held in the San Diego Convention Centre in California from February 9 to 13, 2003, featured:

- 20,000 professionals from around the world
- 200 educational sessions on the latest issues such as disaster preparedness, CPOE, patient safety and e-health.
- 650 companies' most recent developments
- advanced technologies from the Department of Defense
- 38,750 room nights taken at 34 hotels
- 13 kilometres of carpet covering the halls and walkways

Ever wondered what the "stats" are on some of the companies serving your hospital or healthcare organization? We pick McKesson as only one example. The photo on this page is only a glimpse of the small city the company built inside the San Diego Convention Centre. The centre had large conference rooms, dozens of small meeting rooms and hundreds of employees to demonstrate their technology. When the show was "on" this site was a virtual sea of activity. Good Canadian presence too. As an organization, here's what they look like (remember they are dedicated to healthcare):

- 22,000 employees worldwide
- 2001 sales of US\$50 billion
- Provides medical and medical-surgical distribution services, automation-consulting information technology and medical-care management services.

Here are some others we visited (annual sales* in brackets): Microsoft (US\$28.4 billion), Eclipsys (US\$218.1 million), Triple G (C\$22.5 million), 3M (US\$16.3 billion), ORMED (C\$4.5 million), Continuum Solutions, Philips (Eur 38.4 billion), Cerner (US\$752 million), Per-Se (US\$350million), CA (US\$2.9 billion), Agfa (Euro 1.8 billion) and HP (US\$72.3 billion). They and so many others had significant technology on display, and gave Canadian healthcare providers ample opportunity to meet seasoned medical and nursing informatics experts and service personnel. There were 650 companies to pick from.

Universities from across the United States were there to attract students. HIMSS offered three levels of certification and the requisite review courses. All kinds of e-learning could be evaluated and, of course, more than 200 peer-reviewed sessions were scheduled throughout the week.

The first-time visitor was awed by the size of the conference. Think West Edmonton Mall or Toronto Eaton Centre. The 650 or so exhibits seem to go on for ever. Conference rooms were large and often filled to capacity.

To capture the value of a conference of this nature requires an organized approach. Visitors literally have to establish a mission. If not, they can spend all their time in education sessions and miss the important technology being introduced by the corporate suppliers. Or vice versa. Large organizations like Microsoft or McKesson can be very helpful in bringing together any number of players whether they be suppliers, users, media, consultants or any mix of them – constructing some of the most valuable networking opportunities available. The Canadian Healthcare Information Technology Trade Association (CHITTA), and HIMSS Ontario (both with willing sponsors) also stepped up to the challenge, hosting large groups of suppliers and providers alike. Microsoft is particularly adept at this. Their Canadian healthcare initiative is led by two highly charged personalities – Barbara Alexander and Catherine McKinnon. To see them access partners and their own organization's massive resources, and then match them with clients from across the country is a real treat. Even for them, the process provides surprises. It turns out, for example that Julius Sinkevicius is a home-grown Canadian who now has world-wide responsibility for managing Microsoft's new tablet personal computer platform. They connect and reconnect. Almost effortlessly, we are introduced to the corporation's expert in global healthcare (Dr. Ahmad Hashem), its nursing informatics guru (Robin Raiford) and their leading lights responsible for applying all that Microsoft technology to healthcare. It's only a glimpse but an important glimpse in how the Canadian office gains access to the best that Mr. Gates



► Shown here is only a small section of the McKesson technology centre at HIMSS 2003.

has to offer. All you Microsoft users take note. It will come as no surprise that Microsoft also has a media focus, gives us pre-arranged access and keeps us fully briefed. We appreciate their support and the paved roads while allowing us to keep our own priorities first and foremost.

Leading CIOs agree that the annual HIMSS meetings are their educational highlight of the year and the organization is pre-eminent in its offerings. Those who would like to present at the next conference, attend, participate in some of the networking opportunities or navigate the many innovations made available can visit HIMSS.org or write the publishers at Longwoods. We'll try to close the loop for you.

Here are four of the literally thousands of information bulletins generated around the conference.

The Tablet Personal Computer is Microsoft's new tablet personal computer platform – a small wireless laptop-sized unit. This could be the system that convinces many doctors and healthcare professionals to integrate information technology into the operations of practices and healthcare facilities. The Tablet PC is mobile and enables physicians to record notes, access records, check results, order X-rays and hand-write prescriptions. It operates on a version of the Windows XP operating system for gathering, saving and identifying handwriting. The unit could work in various environments, but healthcare is relatively underdeveloped overall in the area of IT, and therefore is of particular interest to Microsoft. HP and other suppliers are also promoting the technology to healthcare facilities of various sizes as well as research centres. The price of each unit is generally US\$1,700 to US\$2,500, which is not relatively high but not low either. Other hurdles to adoption include screen readability, potential fragility and battery life. Source: Wall Street Journal: http://online.wsj.com/article_print/0,,SB10433181599862753944,00.html

The Solutions Toolkit from HIMSS was launched and more than 500 demonstrations were made to interested CIOs, vendors and consultants. This toolkit is designed to help providers make informed decisions about systems selection, vendor/product performance and IT budgeting. Vendors favoured the easy-to-use web front-end and ability to access key industry data sources in one place. Small- to mid-sized consulting firms were favourably impressed; several remarked that it will save them months of billable time and effort gathering and disseminating information to their remote consultants. For more information on The Solutions Toolkit, e-mail toolkit@longwoods.com or sdiwan@himss.org, or visit the Web site at: www.solutions-toolkit.com.

Patient Safety

More than half of the IT executives who took part in the 14th Annual Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society Leadership Survey said implementing technology to reduce medical errors and promote patient safety was a top current IT priority at their facility; 59% reported it would be a top priority in the next two years; and 63% said patient safety will be one of the top five business issues that will have the most impact on healthcare in the next two years. Complete results of the survey can be found at: www.himss.org/2003survey/ASP/healthcarecio_home.asp

Pain-Free CPOE

Computerized Physician Order systems (CPOE) could be found everywhere. Health Management Technology (February 2003) says that one of the biggest obstacles to Computerized Physician Order Entry is doctor reluctance. Physicians worry about training time, security, ease of use, system response times and the ability to use mobile devices. Another key ingredient is the ability of an interface to show information from different clinical applications systems in a single window or portal. More at: www.healthmgt-tech.com/archives/h0203cpoe.htm

* Numbers are based on web information and may not reflect the very latest data. For verification check each company's individual web pages and go to "investors." Agfa, 3M, HP, CA and Microsoft numbers include all products in all markets. Others reflect their healthcare related business only because that's their only business.

Strategic Issues Strategic IT Solutions

The HIMSS mid-year conference provides a platform for industry thought-leaders and healthcare decision-makers to review the latest developments in healthcare information solutions.

- IT Strategies
- Patient Safety
- Clinical Informatics
- Emerging Technologies

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

- Four Educational Tracks: In-depth Sessions
- Presentation of the CEO Connection Award, sponsored by HIMSS & Modern Healthcare
- Roundtable Sessions, Convenient Chicago Location and Attractions, and an Intimate Networking Environment.

For the complete conference agenda go to: himss.org

