



## Data Exchange → HL7 Standard

The HL7 group was founded and charged with developing standards for the electronic interchange of data among health care computer systems such as hospital information management systems, clinical laboratory systems, enterprise systems and pharmacy systems.

The purpose of the HL7 effort is to *facilitate communication in health care settings*. The primary goal is the development of standards *for the exchange of data between healthcare computer applications*. Through the use of these standards, the HL7 group hopes to eliminate or substantially reduce the custom interface programming that has been traditionally used to electronically exchange data between healthcare computer applications. HL7 is accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) to write these standards.

Today, the HL7 standard is supported by most system vendors and used in the majority of large U.S. hospitals today. As the rapid exchange of data continues to become more and more important in the health care environment, *HL7 must be considered to be a requirement for any health care information system*.

The Health Level Seven (HL7) data interchange standard provides an industry standard interface for health care systems that send or receive patient admissions, discharge or transfer (ADT) data, queries, orders, results, clinical observations, billing,

and master file update information. It supports data in either a central patient care system or a more decentralized environment where patient data resides in departmental systems (i.e. lab or pharmacy systems).

HL7 was not designed with any specific software system or hardware platform in mind. Rather, the HL7 standard attempts to support data exchanges between the widest variety of hardware and communications environments.

The development of HL7 and *open systems* design by computer manufacturers put today's health care administrator in a better position than ever to choose the system solution that best fits not only the needs of the hospital, but also the needs of individual departments. Computer networks making use of such industry standards as TCPIP and the acceptance of the HL7 standard have virtually eliminated the costs once associated with creating dual computer infrastructures or unique point to point data interfaces.

No longer is the health care facility tied to one vendor. HL7 gives health care administrators the freedom to choose the software solution that best meets the needs of specialized departments like lab or pharmacy.

***CSS is a member of the HL7 standards group. To learn more about Health Level 7, you can reference the HL7 website at [www.hl7.org](http://www.hl7.org).***