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Pre-Conference Edition

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Welcome from the conference co-chairs

by Angela Fix and Lynn Gibbs Scharf, Conference Co-Chairs

On behalf of the conference planning committees, we welcome your participation in the Sixth Annual Public Health Information Network (PHIN) Conference: August 24—28 at the [Westin Peachtree Plaza](#) in downtown Atlanta. This year's conference will draw attendance from leading public health informatics professionals from all over the world. The conference will build on the success of previous years while incorporating new features to enhance your experience. There will be more opportunities for peer-to-peer collaboration through [Communities of Practice \(CoPs\) meetings](#), [social networking functions](#), [workshops](#), and [workgroups](#).

The goal of this year's conference is to build our public health community through the sharing of promising practices and lessons learned. The program offers many rich opportunities to extend the reach of innovative practices, highlight current issues and trends, translate issues and opportunities for practitioners and policy makers, facilitate community development to accelerate the field, and validate activities at all levels through collaboration and community building.



We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the dedicated efforts of the planning and events committees that have worked so hard to put together an exciting technical and social networking program. The technical sessions will be delivered via four conference tracks: Programmatic, Research & Innovation, Informatics in Action & IT Solutions, and Standards & Interoperability, with each concurrent session providing content from all four areas. The ten keynote speakers, preeminent leaders in public health informatics, will address informatics through communities and collaboration.

The social events will provide ample opportunity to discuss emerging technologies and public health informatics practices while enjoying the camaraderie of colleagues from around the world. Check out the paint station in the exhibit hall for a creative and collaborative break, and don't miss the double-dutch jump rope reception.

We look forward to seeing old friends and meeting new ones at what promises to be both a stimulating and enjoyable event.

What's in store for you

by Lynn Gibbs Scharf

Welcome to the PHIN 2008 Conference. We have quite a week planned for you here in Atlanta! Informatics leaders from around the world will join the PHIN community to discuss cutting edge science, complex issues, and lessons learned in the area of public health informatics.

The PHIN conference agenda is filled with academic sessions and network opportunities. Here are just a few of the items in store for the PHIN community at this year's conference:



- **Keynote speakers:** Representatives from the [Office of the National Coordinator](#), [CDC](#), [ASTHO](#), and [NACCHO](#) will open the plenary session on Monday. **Etienne Wenger**, who coined the term *Community of Practice* (CoP) and is considered to be the father of the CoP model, and Dr. **Carladenise Armbrister Edwards** (Chief of Staff at the Georgia Department of Community Health) will lead the *Community of Practice Kickoff* session on Tuesday. Additionally, there will be an international welcome from Dr. **Stella Chungong** (World Health Organization) and Dr. **Stephen Blount** (CDC Office of Global Health). On Wednesday, Dr. **Seth Foldy** (Chief Medical Officer of the Wisconsin Health Information Exchange) and Dr. **Perry Smith** (Director of the Division of Epidemiology at the New York State Department of Health) will present *Every Journey Begins With One Step: People Collaborating to Improve Public Health*. To close the conference, Dr. **Robert Hendler** (Vice President of Clinical Quality) and **Patrick O'Carroll** (CDC Regional Health Administrator) will present *The Road Goes On and On: Public Health Information Past, Present, and Future*.
- **Community Meetings:** There will be kickoffs of multiple CoPs after the Tuesday morning plenary session, as well as numerous opportunities throughout the conference to learn, join, and help build the future of PHIN.
- **Jump into Informatics:** A double-dutch jump rope team will perform, and a DJ will be on hand to play your favorite music at the Tuesday reception. The reception also features refreshments in a casual setting. This event is included in your conference registration fee, so there is no additional charge to attend.
- **PHI News Daily:** We're publishing special daily editions of *PHI News* to keep you up to date with the latest conference news and events.

CDC, ASTHO, and our partners are truly excited about this year's conference. This year will launch a new era for PHIN—an era of collaboration, growth, and a renewed commitment to improving public health through innovative technology.

Let's talk communities in action: strengthening and launching PHIN CoPs

by Phyllis McGuire

In response to partner requests for a more open, collaborative PHIN, Communities of Practice (CoPs) are a key focus this year. During the conference, there will be a number of key opportunities to learn about and become involved in PHIN CoPs. You will hear about some of the most successful existing CoPs and also learn about several CoPs that CDC is about to launch, including Enterprise Architecture, InfoLinks, Electronic Laboratory Reporting, Outbreak Management, and Vocabulary and Messaging.



One of the new CoPs being launched, the Outbreak Management CoP (OM CoP), aims to bring together PHIN members who are engaged in or have an interest in public health outbreak management. The OM CoP will promote collaboration among all outbreak management practitioners, including CDC program staff, local outbreak investigators, and emergency operations personnel. The OM CoP strives to increase the understanding and capabilities of managing outbreaks. Members will have the opportunity to participate in setting the direction of specific PHIN OM applications, e.g., OMS, share ideas and best practices, and plan and drive the strategic direction for informatics support of Outbreak Management.

Another CoP launch is the Electronic Laboratory Reporting (ELR CoP) for stakeholders involved in defining, implementing, maintaining, evaluating, and evolving electronic lab reporting. ELR CoP will collaboratively develop knowledge, innovation, and best practices through discussion of current obstacles in ELR and share lessons learned to facilitate the modernization of public health surveillance. Additional areas to be considered include messaging for lab orders and specimen tracking. The ELR CoP provides an opportunity for existing groups working in these areas to come together.

Existing CoPs will continue their work during PHIN Conference 2008. One existing CoP, the Enterprise Architecture Community of Practice (EA CoP) has coalesced around PHIN enterprise architects working in collaboration with the programmatic, informatics, and IT communities to share ideas, find solutions, and build upon the foundation of enterprise architecture. EA CoP seeks to increase the use of enterprise architecture in the decision making processes within PHIN while facilitating the introduction of best practices (i.e., SOA and collaborative development). Members will have the opportunity for continual learning, greater access to enterprise architecture expertise, and personal development.



Let's talk *(continued)*

The [Information Links Collaborative Project](#) (InfoLinks CoP) will continue its work to build, improve, and promote health information exchanges (HIEs) within public health systems. This [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#)-funded CoP currently has over 21 state, local, territorial, and other public health members and is supported by both CDC and the Public Health Informatics Institute (PHII).

One of the oldest CDC CoPs is the Public Health Vocabulary Community of Practice (PHVCoP), which has facilitated dialogue and problem solving around vocabulary development, usage, and distribution within public health since 2006. During this year's conference, PHVCoP members will gather to share ideas, identify collaborative efforts, and begin solving common public health vocabulary and messaging challenges. The conference will provide an opportunity to expand the scope of the initial PHVCoP, and the group will formally become the PHIN Vocabulary and Messaging CoP.

The overall goal and intent for PHIN CoPs is to provide an equitable, participatory environment for members to learn, share expertise, and develop solutions more collaboratively to improve public health's capacity to use and exchange information electronically and to formulate a governance strategy for PHIN Communities.



CoPs 101: an interactive workshop

by Phyllis McGuire

During the 2008 PHIN Conference, attendees will be exposed to a variety of opportunities to learn about a major theme—Communities of Practice. To quote Dr. Etienne Wenger, considered the “father” of the CoP concept, “Communities of Practice are groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.” The good news is that during the 2008 PHIN Conference, there will be a multitude of opportunities to ask questions, get answers, and become more informed and less uncertain about CoPs and how they can enhance your professional practice.



Not sure what a CoP is or how participation can benefit you or your organization? Then first plan to attend the Sunday interactive workshop,

Attendance is capped at 50 persons, so if you are interested, you must register soon.

Communities of Practice for PHIN. There you will learn about this collaborative and innovative approach to knowledge sharing and problem solving.



Sunday's (August 24) four-hour afternoon session, from 1:00 PM—5:00 PM, will show you how the CoP can help with challenges, give you access to expertise, or simply provide the opportunity to just have fun with colleagues who engage in the same meaningful work. There will be interactive activities including exercises, scenarios, and presentations of case studies. You will learn about CoP's collaborative and innovative approach to knowledge sharing and problem solving, and you will have the opportunity to practice the skills you learn. Topics will include the business case for using the CoP approach within PHIN; how the CoP approach will be implemented at the PHIN Conference and beyond; how to start and sustain a PHIN CoP using the PHIN CoP Resource Kit; and how PHIN members can join and benefit from a PHIN CoP.



The CoP workshop will showcase the conceptual framework developed by the National Center for Public Health Informatics (NPHI) to set the context for a CoP related to PHIN, and will also demonstrate how the CoP concept provides the appropriate platform by which PHIN partners can come together to solve common problems, learn new practices, exchange information, and otherwise improve PHIN's implementation.

Attendance is capped at 50 persons, so if you are interested, you must [register soon](#). The \$50 fee for the workshop includes snacks.

Remember, if you are seeking a knowledge base or a way to keep abreast of innovation, new strategies, or solve problems more efficiently, don't miss this and other conference opportunities around CoPs.



Rubber meets the road in PHIN workgroups exchanges

by Christi Dant

The annual PHIN conference is planned and viewed as a high impact event and as a nexus for public health informatics leaders. The exchange of knowledge, theory, and practice is its *raison d'être*, and it is in the [workgroups](#) that some of major advancements in practice take place. The “rubber really meets the road” in an impressive array of workgroup and ancillary meetings which convene before and after regular conference times.

For instance, the [National Association of Public Health Information Technology \(NAPHIT\)](#) has scheduled its annual meeting for Sunday. The [National Health Alert Network \(HAN\) Coordinators](#) are meeting on Thursday afternoon to elect HAN officers and discuss topics related to PHIN Certification, alerting, and other special projects.



The [National Association of County & City Health Officials \(NACCHO\)](#) is leading a workgroup that seeks to improve the participation of local public health in current informatics initiatives. The [Association of Public Health Laboratories \(APHL\)](#) is convening a workgroup to develop a roadmap for each state for testing [Public Health Laboratory Interoperability Project \(PHLIP\)](#) surveillance influenza message in a very hands-on, participative session.

The [Countermeasures and Response Administration \(CRA\) System Partner](#) workgroup will include a demonstration of new CRA system features and functionalities. It will also preview the enhancements in the upcoming Release 1.8. A continued emphasis on collaboration to identify and prioritize additional system capabilities will support this work. The joint CDC/[Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists \(CSTE\)](#) workgroup on State Reportable Conditions Assessment (SRCA) will advance its work to eliminate duplication of reports, while private vendors such as Scientific Technologies Corporation and CAL2CAL Corporation use PHIN as a natural gathering place for their clients and perspective clients to discuss user issues and developments.

The workgroups will also launch and initiate a Global Public Health Informatics workgroup and CDC also is seeking to enhance public health's influence on the emerging adoption of Electronic Personal Health Records.

Wherever you turn at PHIN 2008, you just may catch a whiff of rubber in the air. Check out the [schedule of workgroups](#) and be a part of the action.



Grow your public health informatics expertise and get credit for it

by Jessie R. M. Legros

More educational offerings this year

The 2008 PHIN Conference provides more educational offerings in public health informatics than any other CDC event. Conference registrants can earn continuing education (CE) contact hours in several specific professional disciplines. Over 80 scientific sessions have been approved for CE credit. Consult the [PHIN 2008 Education Page](#) to view updated information on approvals by CE type.

This year's 6th annual Public Health Information Network (PHIN) Conference offers administrators, dentists, physicians, physician assistants, epidemiologists, nurses, laboratorians, health educators, IT specialists, program managers, and informaticians a rare opportunity to participate in a highly interactive, encouraging give-and-take between speakers and attendees. An extensive program of practical and theoretical public health informatics topics for practitioners will include speakers who are both leaders and practitioners in the state and federal public health

CE Credits Offered

- Continuing Medical Education (CME)
- Continuing Nursing Education (CNE)
- Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for Health Care Professionals
- Certified Health Education Specialists (CHES)
- CMEs for Non-Physicians

informatics field. With more than 80 scientific sessions, roundtables, posters, pre- and post-conference tutorials, and panel discussions at which over 200 scientific papers will be presented, the 2008 PHIN Conference provides a forum for like-minded public health professionals to network and compare their use of public health informatics practices, as well as to acquire CE credits.

View the [schedule of events](#) to get an overall glimpse of the conference offerings, or check out the [agenda](#) for a comprehensive listing of scientific sessions. Abstracts and specific program presenter information are available from the [agenda](#) in a searchable database with a personal scheduling application that enables you to plan your session attendance. Attendees seeking CE credits will be required to complete an [online evaluation](#). The input garnered from these evaluations is instrumental in informing the process and enhancing future course offerings. Be a part of the future of informatics through learning and providing feedback at PHIN 2008.



Session samplings

by Catherine Pfister

Some of the hottest topics in public health informatics are showcased at PHIN 2008. Here's a taste of what's in store:

Fundamentals of a public health grid

This session will provide you with an overview of grid (distributed computing) and an example of grid technologies in action. Grids are modeled after the internet but can provide more specific tooling and infrastructure for public health in the areas of application/service sharing and data and computational interconnectedness. Grid computing is being explored as a method to address the lack of connectedness in the nation's public health infrastructure. Learn how grid computing may be able to solve the common dilemmas with public health computational and data sharing that cannot be addressed by the internet alone.

Future vision and innovation in informatics

New methods are being explored to address numerous challenges in a time of fiscal uncertainty. Presenters in this session will share lessons learned in diverse areas of application. Methods used in the development of an open-source disease surveillance system and an explanation of the building of a knowledge base for human genome epidemiology will be presented. You'll also learn about global communications technologies relevant to settings within the United States.

Decision support for public health practice

Urgent care physicians have an important role in communicable disease control. You can learn about both existing and perceived barriers to reporting notifiable conditions in the urgent care setting, as well as how informatics can improve reporting and prevention strategies. The next presentation will focus on fusion-based models for disease surveillance and the use of intelligent decision support systems to process a network of these fusion-based models in support of critical decision making processes in diagnostic testing, treatment, prevention, and reporting. Enhancing population-based clinical practice is the focus of the final presentation. See how data can easily be generated from routine care delivery that can then be aggregated and fed back to front-line clinicians.

Standards and case reporting

The use of standards is critical in facilitating electronic reporting, and in the analysis of case data. Progress from this past year's work in the creation of Health Level 7 (HL7) case notification profiles using Messaging Workbench (MWB) will be also be described. Next, learn how a web-based communicable disease reporting and surveillance system in New Jersey is able to identify false-positive Hepatitis A virus (HAV) data from test kits and provide valuable feedback from users.

Remember that whatever sessions you attend, the knowledge you gain today could impact your practice of public health for years to come.



Après conference diversions and delights

by Christi Dant



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The site of this year's PHIN conference, Atlanta's landmark [Westin Peachtree Plaza](#), is the embodiment of the real estate principle of location, location, location. In heart of the convention district and steps from the [Georgia Aquarium](#), the hotel offers easy access to high-end shopping and a litany of other top destinations. The Westin is a station stop on the [Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority \(MARTA\)](#) rail, providing a great option to go **GREEN!** We're talking curb-to-curb service from the [airport station adjacent to the baggage claim area to the Peachtree N-1 Station at the hotel](#). Trains run every 8-to-10 minutes on weekdays and every 10-to-15 minutes on weekends. A one-way fare is just \$1.75, while the Multi-Day Visitor Pass (1-4 Days) for \$8.00-\$12.00 offers unlimited rides. Breeze fare cards can be purchased with cash or credit/debit cards at vending machines located in the stations.

Once settled into your room in the stunning 72-story hotel, concierge Carla Lewis recommends the "[Atlanta Trolley](#) with 13 stops at Atlanta landmarks" for a broad overview the area. The nearest stop is [Underground Atlanta](#), just a ten-minute walk. Other stops include the [MLK Center](#), [Margaret Mitchell House](#), and [Zoo Atlanta](#). Riders can disembark at any destination and rejoin a later trolley.

If stimulating the economy is your goal, Underground Atlanta and the Mall at Peachtree Plaza are nearby, as is Centennial Olympic Park and the World of Coca-Cola. Check out the [Hotel and Atlanta](#) section on the [conference website](#) for more ideas on how to relax after a hard day of conferencing.

Need more time? The Westin Peachtree Plaza is offering a very limited number of rooms at the reduced rate from August 22nd through August 30th.

No hunger pang need go unanswered either. Without leaving the hotel, you can enjoy everything from simple fare to upscale contemporary cuisine atop the hotel in [The Sun Dial Restaurant, Bar & View](#). You can breakfast at The Café on the Lobby Level, or call on room service 24 hours a day. Each day, you can jumpstart your conference experience at the Starbucks in the lobby. Work off those indulgences in the amazing rooftop pool or workout center, or stroll through the [exhibitor's hall](#). With so much to offer, PHIN 2008 and the host city will leave a lasting impression.



In memory of Phyllis McGuire



This edition of PHINews is dedicated to Phyllis McGuire, our team member who passed away as we went to press. There will be a special dedication to her in the conference edition of PHINews, as well as a tribute at the conference.

We'll miss you, "Scoop" McGuire.

The PHINews Team

