

## HL7 Snapshot

Health Level 7 (HL7) is a Standards Developing Organization accredited by the American National Standards Institute to author consensus-based standards representing a broad view from healthcare system stakeholders. What this definition means from a practical standpoint is that HL7 has compiled a collection of message formats and related clinical standards that loosely define an ideal presentation of clinical information. Together, the standards provide a framework in which data may be exchanged.

The HL7 standard is often called the “non-standard standard.” While not entirely fair, it does reflect the fact that almost every hospital, clinic, imaging center, lab, and care facility is “special” and, therefore, there is no such thing as a standard business or clinical model for interacting with patients, clinical data, or related personnel.

From 1998 to 2002, the HL7 community continued to grow and the value of HL7 increased. As newer releases of HL7 V2 became available, the community ultimately achieved the goal of defining 80 percent of an interface and providing a “framework for negotiation” to resolve the remaining 20 percent on an interface-by-interface basis.

In late 2005, the HL7 community released the first version of HL7 V3 – the Normative Edition 2005. In mid-2006, the Normative Edition 2006 was published. With these two initial releases, many sections of the standard are complete, yet there are still several significant areas left to define or create in later releases. HL7 V3 is in the very early maturity stage, with some adoption occurring primarily in Canada and overseas.

From the outset, V3 promises to be a brave new world with “90 percent or more” of the interface predefined. The primary value in the new standard will be an explicit data model, clear definitions, and more use cases that enable less flexibility in individual message elements. The tighter standard promises “easier” interfaces for users.

HL7 is the primary means in which healthcare entities exchange clinical data. NeoTool has been an active participant in the HL7 community since its beginning. Our software solutions encompass our HL7 knowledge, experience, and customer best practices.

For additional information, please register to receive our *HL7 Reference Guide* at [www.neotool.com](http://www.neotool.com), and also visit our Resource Center.