



Dear friends,

It has been a long time coming, but I am delighted to announce that Global Patient Identifiers Incorporated (GPII) is finally beginning the production deployment of the Voluntary Universal Healthcare Identifier (VUHID) system. We – working in conjunction with the Western Health Information Network (WHIN) health information exchange located in Long Beach, California – have received a one-year grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The grant supplies funding for GPII to develop and deploy a disaster tolerant, geographically distributed full production version of the VUHID system. In addition, the grant supports a pilot deployment of the system working in conjunction with WHIN.

As most of you are aware, the problem of providing accurate patient identification across independent healthcare provider entities has been a chronic issue in the United States. A solution to this problem was mandated in the 1996 federal HIPAA legislation which directed the creation of a unique healthcare identifier for individuals. In 1998, based on legitimate privacy concerns, Congress reversed itself and prohibited the use of any federal resources toward the accomplishment of this goal. That prohibition remains in effect today. It means that the primary tool available to healthcare organizations to identify patients is to perform probabilistic demographic matching using an Enterprise Master Person Index (EMPI). However, industry experience has demonstrated that EMPI matching leads to an 8 to 12% error rate. As the US healthcare system moves towards the implementation of Health Information Exchanges (HIEs) containing millions of patients and then proposes interconnecting these HIE's into a Nationwide Health Information Network (NWHIN) covering hundreds of millions of patients it is clear that the error rates associated with EMPI-based demographic patient identification cannot be tolerated.

For the past 24 years I have been working within the ASTM International medical standards group to enable a better solution. Based on two ASTM/ANSI standards that emerged from this work we formed GPII roughly 3 years ago as a healthcare nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the adoption of the VUHID system with the primary goals of enabling accurate patient identification and improved privacy management of clinical information. For the past 2 1/2 years we have managed an Internet-accessible server that has been providing VUHID functions in a test environment. In that test environment we have issued over 500,000,000 identifiers in order to validate the performance and scalability of the system. Due to the generous RWJF grant we will over the next six months upgrade our server to a full production system and deploy a pilot clinical trial of VUHID identifiers in conjunction with WHIN.

We welcome any comments, questions or feedback that you might have concerning this project. Please feel free to contact me via phone or e-mail should you wish to follow up.

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Global Patient Identifiers, Inc. at [www.gpi.info](http://www.gpi.info)  
Sponsor of the Voluntary Universal Healthcare Identifier Project