



**IEEE**

**Ottawa  
Section**



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**MEDICATION RISKS TO BE FOCUS OF PIONEERING OTTAWA SUMMIT**

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*Canadian-led event brings together world-first, multi-disciplinary panel to address patient safety*

OTTAWA, January 10, 2008 – A Canadian-led, international initiative to improve patient safety, focusing on health risks from taking prescribed medications, will be launched at an Ottawa workshop next month.

Experts from around the world will seek technical solutions to patient safety risks, which include illness and deaths from adverse drug reactions, at an upcoming Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) Workshop on Adverse Response Monitoring (WARM) to be held on February 21 – 22, 2008.

The workshop, organized by the Ottawa Section of the IEEE, the world's leading professional association for the advancement of technology, will feature representatives of the Ottawa Heart Institute, Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratories, the University of Toronto, and European Federation of Medical Informatics, among others.

Patient safety is a serious global health issue. According to World Health Organization (WHO) estimates, 10% of patients are harmed while receiving top hospital care. Recognizing the magnitude of the problem, the member states of the WHO supported a 2002 World Health Assembly resolution on patient safety.

“No health care knowledge is more important than how to prevent harm to patients. However, action to reduce known risks has often been far too slow”, said Sir Liam Donaldson, M.D., Chair of the WHO World Alliance for Patient Safety.

The workshop will for the first time bring together a multi-disciplinary team from diverse fields including medicine, physics, engineering, informatics, and measurement science – along with corporate leaders and government policymakers – to grapple with this problem. The goal is to find solutions for detecting and reporting adverse events objectively, promptly and relevantly – case by case, regardless of location – to help optimize the efficacy of medication.

“Engineering shares with medicine a commitment to improve quality of life while putting safety first, and that’s why the IEEE is organizing this workshop. On this common ground, we will seek to work out the differences and identify the cross-cutting technologies that can bridge the gap between physical and physiological safety systems”, said Dr. Wahab Almuhtadi, IEEE Ottawa Section Chair.

Other high risk industries, such as aviation, have a much better safety record than health care. “Your risk of being harmed in an aircraft is 1/1,000,000 versus 1/300 in a hospital. Nobody finds this situation acceptable so we need to find the fastest path to making healing as safe as flying”, said Dr. Tofy Mussivand, Chair and Director of Cardiovascular Devices Division, University of Ottawa Heart Institute.

Most medications today are administered by patients at home, without supervision, and in the absence of systems to manage and track adverse drug responses. Many patients experience complications from prescribed drugs – often severe – adding to the challenges of managing chronic conditions like heart disease and diabetes. This has prompted recent legislation in the United States that requires drug companies to monitor patient reaction to new medications for seven years after approval. The WARM workshop responds to the need to find objective

methods of measuring patient responses to medications and to develop standards for adverse response measurement and analysis.

“Despite the well-known risks associated with using prescription drugs, medication errors and adverse reactions are still poorly understood and recorded. Given these risks, we need to develop objective methods for monitoring an individual’s response to treatment”, said George Mihalas, President of the European Federation of Medical Informatics.

“Is this treatment working for me? That is the question in health care. Without a precise answer to this question, knowing what’s going on with a patient imposes unbearable costs of cognition, communication, coordination, and capability. Personal health monitoring systems are needed to help answer this question efficiently and therefore enable the provision of safe, high-quality care for all”, said Dr. Radu Leca, President of Biosign Technologies Inc.

Reflecting the growing recognition of this need, the workshop has attracted sponsorships from three technology companies: IBM, a pioneer in healthcare information technology; TELUS, a leader in health information delivery; and Emergis, a leading developer of electronic medical record systems.

“At Emergis we are focused on improving patient care and the safety of our health system through the use of information technology. We are very pleased to be participating in this important event which will focus on patient safety risks related to medications and medication administration – an area where information technology must play a larger role in order to advance our health care system to the next level”, said Mark Groper, Executive Vice-President, Health-Public Sector, at Emergis.

Technologies to be demonstrated at WARM include a telematic health information system for monitoring responses to frequently prescribed drugs. The system, developed by Biosign, leverages established technologies to assess a patient’s response to treatment and the need to adjust treatment accordingly.

“IBM supports and applauds this initiative, which addresses challenging questions in the quest for high-quality healthcare. Ensuring that people are not harmed by medication is not an option, but the first condition of quality care. That’s why we are working closely with TELUS and Biosign to offer a prescription for action”, said Sal Causi, IBM Healthcare’s Business Development Executive.

“TELUS is pleased to support this IEEE workshop’s goal of improving patient safety through the use of technology. This is an extension of our ongoing collaboration with IBM and Biosign. The strategy to commoditize self care and remote monitoring is critical as we move toward next-generation healthcare”, said Ibrahim Gedeon, TELUS' Chief Technology Officer.

The workshop seeks presentations and demonstrations of such solutions that balance collaborative innovation with proven global best practices toward a new, safer standard of care.

More information is available at <http://ottawa.ieee.ca/ims/warm2008/index.htm>

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**ABOUT IEEE AND THE OTTAWA SECTION**

The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Inc. (IEEE) is a non-profit, technical professional association of more than 385,000 members worldwide. Through its members, the IEEE is a leading authority in technical areas ranging from computer engineering, biomedical technology and telecommunications, to electric power, aerospace and consumer electronics, among others. Through its technical publishing, conferences and consensus-based standards activities, the IEEE produces 30 percent of the world's published literature in electrical engineering, computers and control technology, holds annually more than 300 major conferences and has nearly 900 active standards with 700 under development. The Ottawa Section, which has been cited four years in a row as the worldwide leading IEEE section for the outstanding activities organized by its volunteers, is dedicated to strengthening the role of engineers in community development.

**ABOUT BIOSIGN TECHNOLOGIES**

Biosign develops technologies, products and initiatives to address critical problems in global health care. The company is committed to becoming the "world's health monitor" with a robust, integrated and portable system that provides valuable information for all parties concerned through a wide range of self-care and patient-centric services. Biosign's advanced technology and continued innovation serve the company's mission to make health care safe, simple, and sensible.

**ABOUT IBM HEALTHCARE**

A pioneer in healthcare information technology, IBM remains at the forefront of improving how healthcare organizations deliver efficient, high quality care. IBM, in combination with its global network of business partners and strategic alliances, delivers powerful technology and comprehensive services that help healthcare organizations achieve success.

**ABOUT TELUS HEALTHCARE**

TELUS addresses challenges in providing sustainable and equitable quality care within a complex system with multiple distributed stakeholders. TELUS solutions enable the delivery of health information to the point of care, while paying particular attention to safeguarding the security and privacy of personal and medical information.

**ABOUT EMERGIS**

Emergis is an IT leader in Canada that focuses on the health and financial services sectors. The "Oacis" Electronic Medical Record has the proven technology to enable delivery of first class, comprehensive care from multiple points-of-service across an enterprise, helping health professionals cost effectively improve patient safety. Its flawless integration of data, from existing systems using scalable, expandable technology, increases productivity and delivers better health care.