



## EXECUTIVE BRIEF

# Achieve FHIR compatibility with clinical interoperability

## Discover how FHIR ignites innovation in healthcare

### The critical importance of FHIR

The Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources (FHIR) framework is here, and it is a strategic part of healthcare integration, as we see with new regulatory requirements that focus on FHIR APIs and innovative new projects to promote clinician and patient engagement. FHIR is rapidly becoming more significant in healthcare and a crucial part of the shifting interoperability landscape, so don't wait on regulations to begin developing your FHIR strategy; work on it now and be prepared when a new mandate is published.

Many clinical applications, such as your electronic health record (EHR), claim they are FHIR-enabled, but in reality, are constrained to specific messages or requests. To become truly FHIR-enabled, you will need to transform the HL7 data coming out of your EHR into FHIR bundles, which can take time, training, and extensive resources. Realize even greater value from clinical data when that data is mapped into a format ingestible by innovative applications to improve provider engagement and patient outcomes.

At the industry level, the Affordable Care Act's population health model and its associated reimbursements and the ONC 21st Century Cures Act are shifting the healthcare landscape to value-based, patient-centric care. These regulatory changes mean that organizations must find ways to improve care coordination and share information across the patient's continuum of care, including with the patient.

Modern data exchange is a crucial component of achieving this shift, which is why the Health Level Seven International (HL7) organization introduced a new, web-based standards framework, Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources (FHIR).

## How FHIR fosters next-level interoperability

FHIR was created as a platform for simultaneously accessing data from different healthcare systems, regardless of how that data is stored, streamlining health information exchange, expanding EHR capabilities, and boosting innovation opportunities. The FHIR standard describes data formats and elements (known as resources that combine to form bundles) and an application programming interface (API) for exchanging electronic health records.

While FHIR builds on previous HL7 standards, such as versions 2.x and 3.x, its focus on modern, web-based API technology makes it easier to implement and exponentially more flexible and scalable. FHIR can extend your legacy clinical data into a modern API ecosystem, making it easier for providers and individuals to access essential health information. By joining a modern API ecosystem, care providers and individuals now have access to their health data via third-party applications and devices, such as tablets, smartphones, or applications developed by individual healthcare organizations.

Despite its vast potential, it's important to remember that FHIR is a standard that must be applied and implemented, rather than a plug and play solution. There are numerous ways organizations can choose to tackle FHIR enablement, but not all of them are likely to yield positive results.

## What to consider when enabling FHIR for your organization

To become FHIR-enabled, you need to send FHIR bundles via web services, a standard protocol supported by most integration engines. But sending legacy clinical data in HL7v2 as a FHIR resource becomes significantly more complicated when you consider the data transformation requirements and nuances.

This process can be time-consuming if you are unfamiliar with the standard or must spend time understanding and developing data transformations for the many nuances of the FHIR standard. Look to partner with a strategic vendor who can provide pre-built solutions to enable more rapid transformation of legacy data to and from the more modern FHIR standard. Leveraging a pre-built solution means that your development team can spend less time building out data mappings and more time exploring the innovative opportunities offered with FHIR.

As a new standard, FHIR can be complex to understand and implement as you also continue to focus on the needs of legacy applications and ongoing integration projects. Mapping HL7v2 to FHIR can be incredibly time-consuming. Being able to leverage the experience and resources of an integration vendor who can provide you with pre-built data mappings will provide you with more rapid time to deployment and quicker ways to realize the value of FHIR for your organization.

## Realize benefits to patients, care providers, and the business

The majority of healthcare leaders understand the importance of interoperability. Successful organizations get that if they want to continue providing a high level of care to patients and stand out in the community, they need to do it the right way.

### Increase patient benefits

To ensure long-term patient health, doctors and other healthcare workers must always have quick and easy access to the most up to date patient information without spending hours in their EHR. Additionally, patients are more likely to adhere to their care plan, such as medication adherence, when they have access to their clinical data. By FHIR-enabling your organization, you can streamline patient access to more of their medical record information, facilitate engagement between care providers and patients, and enable an innovative health platform and strategy.

## Grow care provider insights

Healthcare workers can only make decisions based on the patient data they have access to at the point of care. When information is incomplete or locked away in a technology silo, it can slow the diagnostic process and even lead to poor outcomes and readmissions, both of which negatively influence the reputations of the provider and the health system.

By FHIR-enabling your organization, you can unlock new opportunities to minimize the bureaucratic tasks that lead to patient burnout by reducing paperwork. Hence, physicians spend less time looking for and updating critical clinical information. Additionally, providers will have more convenient access to clinical data across multiple systems. Physicians can spend more time with the patients, not searching information in the EHR.

## Build business success

When a lack of interoperability or innovation obstructs provider activities and patient care, it has a significant impact on the business. Readmissions increase, reimbursements and profitability decrease, and patients and care providers migrate to competitive health systems that boast better processes and outcomes. By enabling an innovative FHIR-based strategy, healthcare organizations can deliver better quality of care and patient engagement, improve access to EHR data to feed population health analytics, extend the functionality of legacy clinical system investments, and meet regulatory requirements.

## New mandates for healthcare interoperability

New rules from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) are working to redefine patient access to their data and transparency of care. These mandates include providing patients access to their claim and encounter data via a FHIR API, exchanging data between payers, providing electronic notifications of patients' admissions and discharges, and implementing new data set standards.

FHIR is no longer optional for providers and payers. Instead of treating these mandates as a minimum requirement for your organization, position yourself for future success by partnering with an organization that can provide you with solutions to more rapidly address these requirements and be prepared for future mandates.

## The better way to FHIR enable

As previous experiences with healthcare integration across the market have established, point-to-point integration is not an effective way to achieve your interoperability goals, especially when working with a standard as complex as FHIR and mapping that to HL7. Another approach is implementing FHIR yourself by building and mapping these HL7 to FHIR data transformations, but this also carries some risk.

First, you need to have IT expertise on staff to not only come up to speed on how the standard works but ultimately integrate the technology with your existing systems, test that it works, and educate the rest of the team on how to use and implement it. Many healthcare groups simply do not have the time or resources to spend on such a project.

Instead, what if you could quickly implement a proven integration solution that is instantly interoperable with the full spectrum of healthcare standards, including FHIR and HL7? And what if you could implement pre-built interfaces with those data transformations already built, tested, and updated, without interfering with your current integration engine and on a separate upgrade path?

What if you could scale that interoperability and FHIR enablement across all systems within your organization, including legacy clinical data and third-party and partner systems outside of your organization?

Healthcare organizations that achieve this level of interoperability have the opportunity to stand out in their communities in critical areas, including care coordination, innovative care delivery, improved patient outcomes and reimbursements, and increased organizational efficiency.

## Conclusion

True interoperability has a domino-like, positive influence on nearly every area of operations. The organization as a whole becomes more efficient since providers always have all of the information they need, at the time they need it, in the applications they're using, and on the device of their choosing. And the information is up to date and accurate.

As a result, doctors and care providers can make better, more informed decisions, and patients have a smoother experience across the continuum of care and enjoy better outcomes. These improvements eventually build into broader benefits for the business as a whole. We're ready to learn about, and support, your latest initiatives to improve patient care and help you explore the positive changes Infor can contribute to your organization's transformation.

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