caBIG™ BACKGROUNDER

ABOUT caBIG™

The cancer Biomedical Informatics Grid, or caBIG™, is an information network initiated by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) that connects teams of cancer and biomedical researchers together, enabling them to better share information and ultimately improve patient care. Often called a "World Wide Web of cancer research," caBIG™ is built in an "open" environment, meaning the development is guided by its own community of users.

Specific biomedical research tools under development by caBIG™ include clinical trial management systems, tissue banks and pathology tools, imaging tools, and a rich collection of integrative cancer research applications. These activities represent the greatest areas of need for integration within the cancer research community.

THE NEED FOR caBIG™

Cancer researchers now collect massive amounts of data, but harvesting important insights through the analysis of that data is the real challenge. To solve this problem, cancer researchers need the ability to easily share tools, data and images according to agreed upon, common standards. caBIG™ seeks to provide the cancer research community with this missing common infrastructure to collaborate and share vital information.

ESTABLISHING caBIG™

The caBIG™ pilot program was launched in February 2004 under the coordinating supervision of NCI. Since then, more than 50 NCI-designated cancer centers have worked in partnership with NCI to identify common needs and to develop the vision, approach, and structure of caBIG™. In February 2004, all caBIG™ pilot participants met in Washington, D.C. for the first time to initiate caBIG™ project activities. By the caBIG™ Annual Meeting in June 2006, the community had expanded widely, with over 800 participants attending to share ideas, applications, and plans for the future.

caBIG™ ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

All caBIG™ activities follow the initiative's principles of open source, open access, and open development, and are based on common standards. This approach means that all caBIG™ products, solutions, and data sets are accessible to the caBIG™ community and any others who want to participate. Anyone can choose to contribute to the diverse activities of caBIG™ and voluntarily participate as a member of the caBIG™ group. Today there are more than 1,000 people from over 80 organizations working on caBIG™ projects. Since its inception, caBIG™ has delivered more than 40 software tools to its user base.

THE FUTURE OF caBIG™

caBIG™ currently serves as the standard advanced technology infrastructure for all NCI initiatives. As caBIG™ technology becomes more widely dispersed throughout cancer centers and more commercial organizations build their tools and systems to match caBIG™ standards and codes, it will become the underpinning of all cancer research knowledge in the U.S. caBIG™ has also begun to develop international partnerships and, in the future, it may well serve as the pathway for connecting other medical research communities around the globe.

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