



# Community Update

## Where caBIG Leads, Industry Will Grow

When bioinformatics executive Dr. Amar Chahal attended the Industry Partners meeting on September 30 hosted by NCI's cancer Biomedical Informatics Grid (caBIG) program, he felt that a watershed moment had occurred. It opened up opportunities for his and other companies working to provide clinical trial information services to the fragmented markets in the cancer and biomedical research communities.

"The Industry Partners meeting reflects a change in caBIG from its previous focus on working only with Cancer Centers and academic institutions," noted Dr. Chahal, executive vice president of Velos, Inc. "It's a welcome change because we were one of the most dedicated attendees at caBIG meetings since its inception 2 years ago. Up until now, we could sit and watch but we couldn't 'play' in the caBIG space. Now we get to play, too, which is fantastic!"

Velos was founded in 1996 to provide software applications to support the

electronic information transformation under way in health care from clinical practice and medical research (<http://www.velos.com>). "Our company focuses on the execution of

clinical trials,"

Dr. Chahal explained.

"We basically provide a

software infrastructure that allows the trial sponsor to go global immediately. You set up a computerized information system to include the documents involved, the mission, what to disclose to various participants, patient selection criteria, and so on."

Initially, Velos executives considered focusing on serving the pharmaceutical and biotechnology sectors, he continued, but this model poses a problem for investigators when every drug company has its own systems and procedures for conducting clinical trials. It was especially confusing to clinicians who participate in several trials for different firms, Dr. Chahal recalled. "They had to remember 4, 5, or 6 passwords and learn 5 or 6

software systems, methodologies, and procedures. That's very burdensome and it's not practical."

When Velos first heard about the caBIG program in 2003, they were intrigued by the possibility for bringing widely accepted, public standards to the marketplace. "caBIG came to the party later than us but what it has done is provide real leadership that has been acutely lacking," Dr. Chahal commented. "It allows us to have central, objective goals to bring everybody together. Once the various players start coming together, caBIG becomes the unifying force."

The caBIG Industry Partners meeting attracted more than 200 representatives from biomedical and informatics companies to discuss and consider involvement in the caBIG program (*NCI Cancer Bulletin*, October 11). Dr. Chahal and his Velos colleagues were especially interested in the sessions on how to make their current clinical trials management system compatible with caBIG standards and tools. "By establishing standards and opening it up to industry, caBIG gives us great comfort because we can continue to develop markets beyond the cancer field," he added. "We feel this is the seminal area and the caBIG standards will be adopted easily beyond cancer." The industry needs to be involved in that standard-setting process, Dr. Chahal urged. "It's a chance for us to play a leadership role." ♦



caBIG™ cancer Biomedical Informatics Grid™

### Featured Meetings and Events

A calendar of scientific meetings and events sponsored by the National Institutes of Health is available at <http://calendar.nih.gov/cgi-bin/calendar>. ♦

The *NCI Cancer Bulletin* is produced by the National Cancer Institute (NCI). NCI, which was established in 1937, leads the national effort to eliminate the suffering and death due to cancer. Through basic, clinical, and population-based biomedical research and training, NCI conducts and supports research that will lead to a future in which we can identify the environmental and genetic causes of cancer, prevent cancer before it starts, identify cancers that do develop at the earliest stage, eliminate cancers through innovative treatment interventions, and biologically control those cancers that we cannot eliminate so they become manageable, chronic diseases.

For more information on cancer, call 1-800-4-CANCER or visit <http://www.cancer.gov>.

NCI *Cancer Bulletin* staff can be reached at [ncicancerbulletin@mail.nih.gov](mailto:ncicancerbulletin@mail.nih.gov).