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World Health Imaging Alliance (WHIA) Announces Support From The Society for Imaging Informatics in Medicine (SIIM)

*Groups Will Work Together to Provide Life-Saving Access to Diagnostic Imaging Systems in
Developing Communities*

June 4, 2009 – Charlotte, NC – Today, the World Health Imaging Alliance (WHIA) announced that the Society for Imaging Informatics in Medicine (SIIM) has agreed to support WHIA in its efforts to deliver thousands of sustainable diagnostic digital imaging systems to developing communities across the globe. Through this new relationship, SIIM has appointed former Board Member George Bowers to serve as the organization’s liaison to WHIA as the two groups identify specific initiatives to work together on. Janice Honeyman-Buck, PhD, editor-in-chief of the “Journal of Digital Imaging”, has also agreed to assist WHIA in editing “Diagnostic Imaging in the Community: A Manual for Clinics and Small Hospitals”, which is a primer on the installation and application of diagnostic imaging in first referral hospitals in developing countries.

“According to the World Health Organization, two thirds of the world’s population has little or no access to basic diagnostic x-ray services, which are an essential component of primary health care delivery. WHIA’s vision is to facilitate the deployment of these life saving digital medical imaging systems to hospitals, health clinics and other medical facilities in underserved communities. With the assistance of SIIM, we are one step closer to making this vision a reality,” said WHIA’s Chief Executive Officer, Ivy Walker.

The World Health Organization estimates that there is a need for one diagnostic imaging system for every 50,000 people. These medical imaging services are needed for the diagnosis and management of many medical conditions such as trauma, chest disease (including tuberculosis), and abdominal ailments. Access to imaging services can be life-saving. But without it, many treatable conditions can prove to be debilitating, impairing an individual’s quality of life or even become fatal.

Despite decades of efforts aimed at addressing the problem of limited access to diagnostic imaging, little progress has been made. A key reason for this has been the lack of coordination in efforts and funding for sustainable deployment of the affordable technology that exists. Infrastructure needed to be created to include support for these critical components, while utilizing more modern and advanced imaging technology.

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This is where WHIA plays an important role coordinating the funding, deployment, training, servicing, and technology research necessary to ensure sustainable, appropriate x-ray systems in the areas of greatest need.

“WHIA is a most needed and dynamic organization. Access to affordable and sustainable diagnostic imaging has the proven ability to save and improve lives. Because of this, we are excited to help in strengthening the resource network WHIA utilizes to support the deployment and maintenance of best in class imaging systems for these environments,” said SIIM’s Executive Director Anna Marie Mason.

Through WHIA, underserved communities can receive a reliable, simple and affordable x-ray system called the WHIS-RAD. This digital system eliminates the need for film and chemicals, and allows high quality images to be produced by health care professionals with limited imaging experience. Each WHIS-RAD includes an x-ray modality, computed radiography system, workstation with optional viewing stations, as well as next generation functionality through the integration of the WHIA box. This add-on module is the first step in allowing for image and data storage capabilities via hosted PACS, electronic archiving and retrieval; connection to high speed transmission networks enabling teleradiology, consultation and oversight; as well as utilization documentation and tracking.

WHIA currently has pilot sites in South Africa and Guatemala and is seeking to identify new qualified sites in partnership with NGOs such as Rotary.

“The diagnostic imaging technology needed to save lives exists and is proven. Together, WHIA and SIIM can provide support to WHIA sites in underserved communities and make a real impact in a tremendous number of lives around the world,” said WHIA’s Chief Executive Officer, Ivy Walker.

About WHIA

The World Health Imaging Alliance (WHIA) is a not-for-profit, diagnostic medical imaging solutions provider. WHIA leverages its relationships with non-governmental organizations, imaging industry vendors and academic institutions to deliver low cost, diagnostic tools to underserved communities worldwide. WHIA provides reliable and sustainable solutions, giving communities access to the latest technology for better patient care.

About SIIM

The Society for Imaging Informatics in Medicine (SIIM) is proud to be the leading health care professional organization representing interests and goals of those who work with and whose work is affected by the rapidly changing world of information and imaging technologies. SIIM seeks to spearhead research, education, and discovery of innovative solutions, and to explore new technologies and applications to improve the delivery of medical imaging services and the quality and safety of patient care.