



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

## **DSS, Inc., Announces Open Source Version of vxVistA EHR Framework, Joins Open Health Tools Foundation**

**Leading VistA developer release includes commercial enhancements for non-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Providers**

**Juno Beach, FL—January 7, 2009—** DSS, Inc. <[www.dssinc.com](http://www.dssinc.com)> the leading developer of enhancements to VistA, the VA's award winning electronic health record, announced it will open source the code for its vxVista<sup>®</sup> an enhanced version of VistA designed for the commercial market. In this major development, DSS, Inc. has effectively removed the greatest obstacle to collaboration in the VistA community by providing their enhanced version of VistA under a commercially friendly open source license that can be used to unite the VistA community.

Mark Byers, President and CEO of DSS, Inc., said that vxVista<sup>®</sup> is being released as open source software at a critical time in this country's history. Byers stated, 'the health care crisis is one of the major challenges facing this country,' adding that "VistA deployments in the private sector have demonstrated that VistA can provide private hospitals and clinics with the highest quality Electronic Health Record in the shortest amount of time for a fraction of the cost of competing products." According to Byers, "We can lower the cost of health care while significantly increasing the quality of that care by implementing VistA across the United States."

A large number of health care leaders in the United States also believe that VistA provides the ideal framework for rapidly implementing electronic health records across the country. Rep. Pete Stark (D-CA) introduced the Health-e Information Technology Act (HR 6898) last fall that lays out a clear strategy in this regard.

As an integral part of its actions, DSS, Inc. has joined the Open Health Tools (OHT) Foundation. Open Health Tools is the leading umbrella non-profit organization for open source projects in healthcare. Skip McGaughey, Executive Director of Open Health Tools said "We are very excited about DSS joining OHT and making such a significant contribution." McGaughey added, "The VistA technology has been used by millions of people and has established the benchmark for the industry." Speaking on behalf of OHT, McGaughey emphasized that "We are looking forward to helping bring this technology to a world wide community."

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DSS' Mark Byers said “we are looking forward to working with Open Health Tools.” Byers explained, “we had been looking to open source vxVistA<sup>®</sup> for the past two years. Open Health Tools presented us with the kind of approach that we were looking for as well as a commercially-friendly license that members of the VistA community can work with.” The vxVistA EHR framework will be part of the OHT Forge project.

vxVistA<sup>®</sup> will be released under the Eclipse Public License (EPL). The Open Health Tools (OHT) Foundation is modeled after the Eclipse Foundation <[www.eclipse.org](http://www.eclipse.org)>, one the most successful open source projects today. Using the Eclipse Public License all members of the “VistA community”, including competitors, will be able to use vxVistA<sup>®</sup> as the core framework for their products and innovations.

Peter Groen, a leading advocate of VistA in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) since its inception, applauded DSS' move. Mr. Groen, who was the National Director of the Health IT Sharing Office within VHA, prior to his retirement, said “This is an extremely important move. DSS has tremendous credibility and a long successful track record with VistA. As the Open Health Tools (OHT) Foundation and its key members get behind this, major advances and new markets will open up for VistA and the many companies supporting it.” According to Groen, “This becomes a key step in moving ownership of VistA into the larger 'open community' where it belongs and can be free to continue growing and adapting to meet the needs of the ever changing world of health care.”

In addition to being released under the Eclipse Public License, vxVistA's framework will follow that of the Eclipse Foundation. Companies will be able to collaborate to build products by programming and packaging plug-ins, modules and extensions to vxVistA's core framework. There were several considerations that factored into DSS, Inc. and Open Health Tools choice of the Eclipse framework for vxVistA<sup>®</sup>:

- **Focus on Value-Add:** Using the VistA ecosystem framework, VistA vendors, users, and contributors will be able to focus on their value-added enhancements rather than wasting time re-inventing the base code.
- **Lower Development Costs:** Contributors will have lower application development costs enabling them to get to market faster.
- **Lower Risk of Adoption:** Users will face a significantly lower risk of adoption than proprietary, closed-source applications as there will be an entire ecosystem and community behind vxVistA<sup>®</sup>.
- **Enhanced Testing and Debugging:** vxVistA<sup>®</sup> code is based on the latest version of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' VistA, which has been continually updated with patches and enhancements by DSS, Inc. As open source code, vxVistA<sup>®</sup> will benefit from a much wider audience of programmers

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to more thoroughly test and debug it.

- **Compatible Programs:** Programs using the same vxVistA<sup>®</sup> framework will be compatible through the use of plug-ins and modules, as multiple plug-ins and modules can be used with a single instance of the framework.
- **Potential for Widespread Use:** vxVistA's compatibility with other framework programs will lead to its widespread use by hospitals, clinics, medical practices, and large numbers of programmers.

Open Health Tools CEO Skip McGaughey comments, "open source is all about collaboration and is increasingly being recognized as the currency in the new economy. This project is all about meeting an industry need and promoting standards to solve complex interoperability problems in healthcare."

About DSS, Inc.

DSS, Inc. offers vxVistA, an enhanced version of the award winning software that runs the Veterans Health System. vxVistA provides documented improvements in both the quality and cost of health care. In addition to complete ambulatory EHR and HIS functionality, DSS offers integrated, comprehensive behavioral health and dental modules. DSS, Inc. employs its special expertise by providing VistA integration solutions for over a dozen third party software applications including clinical monitors and patient accounting systems. DSS also offers professional services including installation, support and training for vxVistA users.

For more information, please visit <[www.dssinc.com](http://www.dssinc.com)>.

About Open Health Tools

Open Health Tools is an open source community with a vision of enabling an ubiquitous ecosystem where members of the Health and IT professions can collaborate to build inter operable systems that enable patients and their care providers to have access to vital and reliable medical information at the time and place it is needed. Open Health Tools will generate a vibrant active ecosystem involving software product and service companies, medical equipment companies, health care providers, insurance companies, government health service agencies, and standards organizations.

For more information, go to <[www.openhealthtools.org](http://www.openhealthtools.org)>.

Links:

DSS Inc.: [www.dssinc.com](http://www.dssinc.com)

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Open Health Tools: [www.openhealthtools.org](http://www.openhealthtools.org)  
Open Health Forge: [www.openhealthtools.org/OHTForge.htm](http://www.openhealthtools.org/OHTForge.htm)  
Eclipse Foundation: [www.eclipse.org](http://www.eclipse.org)  
HR 6898-The Health-e Information Technology Act:  
<http://www.house.gov/stark/news/legislation.htm>

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