What is the Gravity Project?
Launched in May 2019 with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Gravity Project has convened over 700 experts from across the nation to collaboratively develop recommendations for how best to capture information for interoperable electronic health information exchange about clinical activities related to three social determinants of health (SDoH) domains: food insecurity, housing instability and quality, and transportation access.

The project is a direct response to multi industry recommendations and calls to action around creating national standards for representing SDoH data in EHRs. There is broad consensus that SDoH information improves whole person care and lowers costs. This is supported by growing evidence demonstrating strong links between social risk and an individual’s health and health care utilization. This correlation has led health systems increasingly to incorporate social risk data into clinical decision making to help reduce costs and provide more targeted services.

Why is a standardization project important?
Despite increased interest around identifying and addressing social determinants in the context of US health care settings, existing medical coding vocabularies are poorly equipped to capture related clinical activities. Consensus is needed on core concepts related to clinical social determinants activities (e.g. screening, diagnosis, intervention) as well as on codes and value sets that will adequately reflect these concepts.

Standards are needed to promote the: collection and use of the data, to facilitate sharing of the data across organizations, and to facilitate payment for social risk data collection and intervention activities.

Gravity Project Scope
The Gravity Project seeks to identify coded data elements and associated value sets to represent SDOH data documented in EHRs across four clinical activities: screening, diagnosis, goal setting, and interventions. Phase 1 deliverables (2019 – 2020) are:

- Develop use cases to support documentation of SDoH data in EHRs or related systems.
- Identify common data elements and associated value sets to support the use cases.
- Develop recommendations on how best to capture and group these data elements for interoperable electronic exchange and aggregation.
- Initiate development of an HL7® Fast Health Interoperability Resource (FHIR®) Implementation Guide based on the defined use cases and associated data sets in order to set up the next phase in 2020.

Phase 2 deliverable (beyond 2020) are:
- Collaborate with coding and terminology suppliers to address coding gaps defined in Phase 1.
- Develop and test coded SDoH data sets for use in FHIR.
- Develop and ballot an HL7 FHIR SDoH Implementation Guide.

Ultimately, the Gravity Project will lay the groundwork for national standardization of food, housing, and transportation needs data. In August 2019, the Gravity Project became an official HL7 FHIR Accelerator Project. Future phases will focus on developing standards for other social risks increasingly addressed in clinical settings (e.g., utilities insecurity, low education, lack of personal safety, legal and other needs).

Gravity Project Approach
To ensure broad stakeholder engagement from across the health and human services ecosystem to include clinical provider groups, community-based organizations, standards development organizations, policy makers, and health IT vendors—the Gravity Project was initiated as an open, public collaborative using an HL7® sponsored Confluence Page. All stakeholders are welcome to participate and contribute to the development and review of Gravity deliverables.

To learn more about the Gravity Project and participate visit: https://confluence.hl7.org/display/GRAV/The+Gravity+Project
To join the collaborative, visit: https://confluence.hl7.org/display/GRAV/Join+the+Gravity+Project
For additional questions or request a project overview meeting, contact: gravityproject@emiadvisors.net