ISO (International Organization for Standardization)

Stated Purpose: ISO (International Organization for Standardization) is the world's largest developer of standards. In it's strategic plan 2005-2010, ISO states that its "International Standards and deliverables support: facilitation of global trade, improvement of quality, safety, security, environmental and consumer protection, as well as the rational use of natural resources and global dissemination of technologies and good practices all of which contribute to economic and social progress."

Collaborative efforts: The strongest collaboration ISO has is with the IEC (International Electrotechnical Commission). These two organizations cooperate jointly with ITU (International Telecommunications Union). IEC is also a non-governmental organization while ITU is apart of the United Nations Organization. These three world leaders in standardization have a strong collaboration in the fields of information technology and telecommunications. ISO also collaborates with regional organizations and hundreds of specialist liaisons who have an interest in certain aspects of ISO's efforts.

Membership: National standards institutes or other organizations that represent standardization in a country are eligible for full membership known as "Member bodies". Only one member in each country may represent that country. Each member has one vote regardless of the size or economic strength of the country. Countries with fewer economic resources may have one of two separate categories of membership at a reduced rate, which does not allow them a vote, but does allow access to standardization development. These are "Correspondent members" from countries who do not have a fully developed national standards activity and "Subscriber members" who are institutes from countries with very limited resources but who wish to maintain contact with international standardization. Correspondent members are not actively involved with technical work but are kept fully informed. There are currently 150 national standards institutes as members.
Member organizations participate in technical committees who actually develop the standards. Experts and others with specific knowledge participate as national delegations chosen by the countries member organization to work on specific standards. Health Informatics technical committee 215 is the group responsible for the standardization of nursing terminology as well as other health related terminology. Its secretariat is ANSI (American National Standards Institute).

Publications: ISO's publications include handbooks, standards publications, and two magazines. ISO Focus is a monthly magazine which presents an overview of ISO's activities. Each issue focuses on one aspect of standardization such as Education in the April issue and how standardization is necessary or improves the subject. ISO

Management Systems is more geared towards actually looking at the standards specifically. Handbooks are available on specific topics and include all standards related.

Accomplishments: ISO was created when delegates from 25 countries met in 1946 to create an international organization to facilitate coordination and unification of industrial standards. ISO officially began in 1947. ISO has published more than 15,000 International standards related to specific products, activities, environmental conditions, as well as generic management system standards.

I think ISO's greatest accomplishment is in bringing together teams from world-wide organizations, providing opportunities for them to discuss, argue and debate until they reach consensus and produce a draft document for approval by the entire membership. Membership is voluntary and the member organizations actually pay the technical team members expenses to allow them to work on specific technical committees.

The standardization of products benefits all of society in that is provides information for developers to ensure their product or service will be acceptable in their fields. It provides consumers with some assurance that the item will be safe and reliable and compatible with other items they already own.

In the field of healthcare, we have the technical committee 215 working on standardization of terminology (including nursing) as well as reducing redundancy. The committee has already published 26 standards in this field. In addition, ISO has also published standards related to security of health information ISO 22857:2004.