

40 Years of IMIA: Shaping Medical Informatics Worldwide. Editorial

N. M. Lorenzi

Vanderbilt University Medical Center, Nashville, USA

IMIA at 40 - from Inspiration to Impact and Influence

Imagine it is September 1966 and François Grémy from France is participating in the 4th International Conference of Cybernetic Medicine. Listening to the presentations he becomes convinced that medical informatics is the “key” to unlocking the future for the projections and anticipations being described. He is further **inspired** about the need for an international association that focuses exclusively on medical informatics.

What a wonderful **inspiration!**

By 1967 Dr. Grémy established the Technical Committee 4 (TC4) on medical informatics within the International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP). The first meeting of this new medical informatics committee was held in Paris in April 1968. A dozen nations were represented [1]. The IFIP Technical Committee 4 evolved into the **International Medical Informatics Association (IMIA)**!

From the initial twelve nations IMIA now has a network of national member societies, academic institutions and corporate members, corresponding member countries and affiliate organizations. In the spring of 2007 our member

organizations total more than 150. This represents a 25% increase since 2004, when IMIA had 123 member organizations at the time of Medinfo 04.

IMIA members and products have had an **impact** and **influenced** the world during the last forty years! Some of the many IMIA significant achievements include:

- Medinfo conferences and other conference events delivered by our regional groups and by our Working Groups and the Nursing Informatics Special Interest Group that convey the knowledge of informatics.
- Publications—the *IMIA Yearbook*, *the International Journal of Medical Informatics* and *Methods of Information in Medicine* as well as the publications of our multiple working conferences and working groups that convey the most up-to-date status of the knowledge of informatics [2].
- Products, for example from educational guidelines [3] to a Code of Ethics that have been translated into many languages and adopted by many countries throughout the world [4].
- Connections—the direct people to people connections have always been important and in recent years the connections have been strengthened by an electronic network to connect all members and in turn their organization members.

Since our 40th anniversary is in conjunction with a Medinfo year it is exciting to share IMIA's history both at the Medinfo conference and also permanently in the *IMIA Yearbook 07 of Medical Informatics*. This Yearbook contains a number of papers that present an overview of our history. The articles include:

- IMIA: Coalescing Medical Informatics Worldwide for 40 Years. Casimir Kulikowski [5]
- IMIA Presidential Retrospectives on Medical Informatics. Marion J. Ball, Jan H. van Bommel and Shigekoto Kaihara [6]
- IMIA's Organizational History 1967-2007. Steven Huesing [7]
- IMIA's Publications: 1967-2007. Hans Peterson and Martina Hutter [2]

Today IMIA member organizations represent the majority of people in the world. The respect for the knowledge of health and biomedical informatics

will continue to grow and in turn we are optimistic that IMIA member organizations will continue to increase. In turn IMIA will have more opportunities for impact and influence.

But, now is the time to reflect on our past and thank those who have brought us to today!

Thank you one and all!

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Correspondence to:

Nancy M. Lorenzi, Ph.D.
 President of the International Medical Informatics Association
 Professor of Biomedical Informatics and
 Assistant Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs
 Vanderbilt University Medical Center
 Informatics Center, Eskind Biomedical Library
 2209 Garland Avenue
 Nashville, TN 37232-8340
 USA
 E-mail: nancy.lorenzi@vanderbilt.edu