Editorial

eHealth International

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Welcome to eHealth International. In this journal we will look at technology from the perspective of the health professionals and patients using it. We will focus on applied technologies i.e. technologies with practical applications that have the potential to improve both quality of and access to healthcare. This is an exciting time with respect to the new technologies available in healthcare. The main force to date that has been deciding the path of technology however has been that of market forces. This has not always worked to the best advantage of the people using the technology – patients and healthcare professionals. In this publication, we will focus on aspects of technology that are important to the professionals and patients empowered with it, including usability, clinical utility and appropriateness. We are all aware of examples of hardware and software applications that have been implemented in hospitals, trusts, or country-wide which have ended up wasting thousands and often billions of dollars and have become obsolete before long because of a lack of open discussion about their appropriate use. By viewing the use of eHealth from an international perspective we can look at the lessons learned from others and appreciate what is necessary for us to implement the necessary tools that we need as clinicians to do our job better and to access the information we need to improve the quality of care. Telemedicine, Health Information Systems, Databases, Genomics, Biotechnology, eLearning, Continuing Professional Development, Nanotechnology, Drug Treatment Technologies, Decision Making Tools, Diagnostic Aids, eLibraries, Laboratory tools, and Robotics are all innovative or 'disruptive' technologies that promise a better health for our children. We will critically evaluate these tools as practical 'applied' applications to assist in clinical work.

This journal will look at the resources necessary to implement such tools in a clinical setting and the appropriateness of their use in specific patient populations. We will strive for a particular emphasis in the use of technology in developing countries and in resource-poor settings. The use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) and the advent of other eHealth innovations offers many countries the opportunity to 'leap frog' past the many mistakes of industrialised countries in implementing technology in healthcare and allows them to re-design their healthcare systems in ways that we may only dream of in areas with already heavily entrenched systems. Such is the – as yet – unrealised potential of eHealth in such settings. This potential can only be achieved through the international exchanges of both successes and lessons learned. This is the mission of both *eHealth International* and of the International eHealth Association.

This journal will make use of multimedia and of the full potential that an online journal can offer that cannot be served by print-only publications. We will be including for example a Virtual Journal component whereby we regularly highlight key publications in eHealth from elsewhere. Interviews with prominent figures in eHealth and in Healthcare in a wider sense will be a regular feature using streaming media. We are currently developing a data-

base of comprehensive eHealth resources including the publications from other sources that will be an exportable database in all common bibliographic forms for the user to import for their own academic use in order to keep up with this rapidly growing field. This issue has some samples of how this will work with an audio stream of our interview with Dr. Bahabri, some samples of key document links and what will be the beginnings of the extensive database currently in development. These are all presented here in order to get your comments of their form and use as we develop this further. We are currently putting together the database, a small sample of which is now available through this site, and will update this regularly for our readers. Comments are welcome on the current form and export capabilities as we build the content. Similarly, we would welcome linking suggestions and recommendations for specific links to outstanding articles in the field that our readers may want to put forward. *eHealth International* will also be published through the Print-on-Demand services of BioMed Central in a paper format for special topics and sponsored issues to maximise its impact in all media.

This issue of *eHealth International* features editorial comments from leaders in the International Hospital Federation, the World Medical Association, and the International eHealth Association. We also have state-of-the-art reviews from healthcare leaders in North America, Russia and the Middle East. We have already received submissions from all corners of the globe and in the upcoming weeks and years will be publishing original articles from Africa, Asia, Australia, the Pacific and South America as well. We are accepting both original research papers and review articles including systematic reviews. We will look critically at the state of the evidence in eHealth. Our authors are from all over the world, but we particularly encourage submissions from developing countries. Our Editorial Board is also fast expanding with experts in all fields of medicine and from all corners of the globe. Our peer review process and Editorial Board includes expertise not only in health technology, but also in all aspects of medicine and surgery as we seek to bridge the gap between technology and the clinician towards real clinical applications.