

Guest editor's introduction to special issue on HIC 2008

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This issue of the Journal represents selected contributions from the 2008 Health Informatics Conference of the Health Informatics Society of Australia. The conference placed the patient at the centre of health care and health informatics.

The diversity of papers included offer something of relevance to all involved in healthcare, whether you are an administrator, a person with technical responsibilities, a clinician trying to understand what is in it for them, or a patient or carer seeking information about advances being made.

There are ideas and projects that describe ideas that are simple and effective 'low hanging fruit', while papers take technology a step further in an effort to offer opportunities that have not been feasible in the past.

The place and contribution of the patient and carer is highlighted presenting them as a contributor to the information system as well as a user

of it. The patient and the carer have the closest association with conditions being treated and the lifestyle in which treatment has to occur if it is to be viable and successful.

For those interested in the application of technology to assist consumers the paper "Qualities" not "Quantity" considers the classification of consumer health website to improve consumer access and provides a mechanism for assessment of quality. This is a fine example of the use of Web technology to provide simple, useful information to support patients and providers alike.

Consumer engagement in care planning using a model driven approach uses informatics to better understand the requirements for care planning and how to present them most effectively using Flash applications.

If you are keen to understand the issues that determine success or failure in IT projects in healthcare the

article on barriers to putting the person at the centre will answer some of your questions.

The domains of healthcare in this edition are also extensive, covering aged care, community nursing, operational IT, support needs, medication, and technology including video-phones and Flash graphics.

As you read these papers challenge yourself to view e-health and the potential to improve healthcare through the use of technology in a different way – that type of thinking is often the route to invention and discovery – and there is so much out there for health informatics to discover and deliver.

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