

Editorial – Aged Care informatics – Preparing for the road ahead

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We are grateful to the *electronic Journal of Health Informatics (eJHI)* for the opportunity to present this special issue on aged care informatics. The journal has continued to be a strong supporter of aged care informatics and the huge potential contribution that information technology (IT) can make to improve the quality and safety of aged care.

Five years have now passed since the appearance of the last *eJHI* special issue on aged care informatics in 2007, signalling the role that technology can make to enhancing the safety and independence of older people [1]. Much has happened since then, and it is appropriate to reflect on our progress, highlight some of our key achievements and use this special issue to re-focus attention on some of the key challenges that confront us into the future. Ping Yu's review of "Aged Care IT in Australia – the Past, Present and Future" is a feature of this special issue [2]. Yu writes with first-hand experience of some of the major developments in aged care informatics in the last ten years, outlining the spectacular growth of electronic systems in aged care and the development of a strong commercial presence in the sector. According to Yu, the next stage of development will focus on the diffusion of electronic clinical and care management systems for community care, including telehealth applications [2].

The research papers appearing in this special issue highlight some of the key developments pointed to it in Yu's overview. Matthew D'Souza, Montserrat Ros and Mohanraj Karunanithi's paper, "An Indoor Localisation and Motion Monitoring System to Determine Behavioural Activity in Dementia Afflicted Patients in Aged Care" [3] describes the development and trial of a system to support the continuous monitoring and surveillance of patients with dementia. Their paper outlines the use of an unobtrusive wearable mobile node

that achieved real-time localisation and recorded path and motion information for eight hours. The authors explain that localisation technologies in the past have struggled to provide adequate levels of motion and location accuracy for unobtrusive behavioural analysis. Their research thus provides a solid basis for developing strategies to aid the safety and care of dementia patients into the future [3].

Mary and Lawrence Lam's paper, "Health information-seeking behaviour on the Internet and health literacy among older Australians" [4] highlights the existence of an interaction effect between health information seeking behaviour and education levels on health literacy. Such research findings are important particularly given the contribution the Internet and consumer e-health approaches, such as decision aids and virtual support communities are making to how consumers make their health choices [5]. The authors conclude that designers of web pages can employ such findings to improve the design and promulgation of health information through the web [4].

This issue is also pleased to draw attention to the recent publication of the book "Intelligent technologies for bridging the grey digital divide" edited by Jeffrey Soar, Richard Swindell and Philip Tsang [6] and reviewed by Andrew Georgiou in this issue [7]. The book is a welcome and valuable contribution to the field of aged care informatics, providing a comprehensive international overview of technological developments to support ageing in place, engagement in daily life and the care of frail older people.

This special edition of the *eJHI* marks an important contribution to the growth and expansion of aged care informatics. The challenge of an ageing society is today the focus of major public, political and scientific discussion [8, 9]. The role of aged care informatics

is expanding rapidly with a corresponding growth of sophisticated technological developments geared to improving the care of older people [10]. It is important that this growth continues to be met by a robust commitment to the generation of evidence to inform the choices that consumers, health care providers and governments make in the delivery of safe and quality care for older members of our community into the future.

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