EDITORIAL

Welcome – to yet another eHealth journal!

Yes indeed – and proud of it. eHealth is at a cross-road. Healthcare is becoming too expensive as populations grow older and disease profiles shift from infectious to chronic disease. At the same time there are not enough healthcare professionals to serve the needs of the growing population, particularly in the developing world where many live on less than US$ 1 per day. China, India and Africa account for about one-half of the World's population and bear a disproportionate burden of disease (e.g., HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria). For them, improved access to healthcare is a priority. eHealth offers solutions to these dilemmas. For those active in Global eHealth, there is an understanding of the tremendous volume of eHealth activity performed in countries throughout the world. This includes developing and least developed nations where innovative solutions must be sought in severely resource restricted settings. Yet where do we see that insight published?

Current journals are largely Western-centric. The SCImago Journal & Country Rank is a publicly available tool that, within limitations, can be used to exemplify this issue. If we use Health Informatics in Medicine as the exemplar, SCImago reveals the top 10 countries (by publications) between 1996 and 2011 to be: United States (6,578), United Kingdom (2,613), Germany (1,874), Canada (1,119), Netherlands (800), Italy (792), Japan (786), Australia (747), France (561), and Sweden (432). Thereafter, numbers drop progressively and quickly to single digits.

In the field of eHealth, existing journals have reached a level of maturity where the articles accepted are those offering solid evidence of relevance to the developed world, and justification of ongoing expenditure and research in the field. But, we need to learn lessons from all parts of the World. There is a great need to nurture and develop a credible avenue for publication of globally relevant findings, and we believe the JISfTeH can act as a meeting place for the developed and developing eHealth Worlds. This goal will not be simple to service, as there is significant capacity building necessary to develop and mature the publication skills of many 'would be authors' from developed and developing nations. Our goal is to mentor these authors (not function as ghost writers), which will take some time to deliver. However, it remains our intent. At the recent Med-e-Tel conference, Dr. Najeeb Al-Shorbaji from the WHO called for more eHealth research to provide evidence of global relevance – with your help, we can be a part of the solution.

Our Sponsor

Our sponsor is the ISfTeH (International Society for Telemedicine and eHealth), and their support of this Journal (JISfTeH) clearly demonstrates their commitment, and continuing intent of being a global leader by promoting and servicing eHealth around the world. With 43 member nations, ISfTeH is the meeting place and melting pot of eHealth internationally. Its meetings are where you hear of work from places as disparate as the Ukraine and the United States, Ghana and Germany, India and Italy, and Armenia and Australia. We intend the same to be so for the Journal.

Importantly, however, the Journal is administered at arms-length from the Society, with management conducted by its international volunteer Editors, and with peer review support provided by its international volunteer Editorial Board.

The editorial team is Malina Jordanova from Bulgaria who will continue to edit and manage the Global Knowledge Resources and provide editorial advice, Richard Scott from Canada who will co-edit JISfTeH and Maurice Mars from South Africa, journal manager and co-editor.

They will be ably supported by editorial board members from the United States, Canada, Brazil, Germany, Belgium, Poland, Ukraine, Russia, India, Pakistan, Philippines, Australia, Japan and South Africa. A truly international team.

Our Format

The journal will be 'open access', making your work immediately accessible to anyone, anytime, anywhere. It will be peer reviewed. It will also be swift - while published in 4 virtual issues per year, articles will be published on a rotational basis (as soon as type-set following final acceptance), and with quick turn-around (target of 4-6 weeks). Our plan is also to be less costly than other open access journals - free during the first year, with a sliding scale of minimal cost thereafter (based upon classification of the primary author's origin as a member of a developed, emerging, developing, or least developed nation.)

Our Sister Publication

The Global Knowledge Resources on Telemedicine and eHealth, now in its 6th volume, has published the presentations at Med-e-Tel as short papers – and will continue to do so. Although available in book form to participants of the annual Med-e-Tel conference and on the Web (three years after publication) the information is not getting out to enough people in a timely manner. Many of these short papers never see the light of day as full papers. Language is one of the major obstacles. Papers submitted by people who are not English first language speakers need far more editorial and copyediting work, this takes time, money, and effort.

We also believe work in developing countries is often seen as inferior – not as scientifically sound or rigorous as well funded studies in the Western World. Or, the problems of the developing (non Western) World are not considered of major import to many in the developed World, and even less so to the commercial sector. But there are lessons to be learned from work in countries that are truly in need of, and seeking the advantages of, national eHealth solutions.

Our Commitment

It is not the intention of JISfTeH to be either a second rate journal, or a journal of the developing World. As the founding editors of JISfTeH we acknowledge that we may not, initially, be the journal of choice for established researchers in eHealth. But our vision and goal is to become a pre-eminent journal within five years.

To do this we must: Show a sustained and increasing number of publications; constantly improve the quality of the publications; maintain a strong editorial team, and support a dedicated editorial board and review panel who understand the ethos of the journal.

We believe we have the nucleus of the first two and a large community of potential reviewers – you, our readers.

As editors, we will strive to work with authors to fine tune their manuscripts and try to improve the quality of papers that at first appearance may seem flawed but with potential. We hope that this will become your journal of choice. To this end we have instituted 'work in progress' and 'short report' sections of the Journal to facilitate publication of work from the developing World.

One of the important issues to academics is listing of the Journal in scientific databases such as PubMed and the Thompsons ISI index. Once this issue is on the Web we will start the process of being indexed in Google Scholar, the Directory of Open Access Journals and others. We will list these as they occur.

This Issue

Published today is the inaugural Editorial of JISfTeH. Published soon will be papers on important and often neglected topics; from development of business case rationale (Schiltz et al.), through presentation of minimalistic but effective eHealth solutions (chronic disease management - Rich et al., and eHealth awareness building - Barrett). These represent examples of what we hope the Journal will contribute – solid but simple solutions that can be sustainably implemented and scaled. Our expectation - our hope - is that a drive towards such solutions will be led by imaginative initiatives spawned in, and reported by, investigators from around the World, but especially severely resource restricted settings in the developing and least developed World.

Welcome to *your* new Journal.

Maurice Mars
Richard Scott
Malina Jordanova