

## Health On the Net Foundation Guest Editor of a Special Issue of The International Journal of Medical Informatics on **Health and the Internet for All**

*HON European Co-President Prof. Antoine Geissbuehler and Executive Director Celia Boyer served as guest editors of a special issue of the International Journal of Medical Informatics, with the theme, "Health and the Internet for All."*

The theme, "Health and the Internet for All" is a reference to the 1978 Alma Ata Declaration on Primary Health Care, which sets the goal of Health for All, somewhat optimistically, by the year 2000. The Internet, undreamed of in 1978, today adds the dimension of electronic access to the global challenge of equitable distribution of healthcare.

This issue of IJMI presents the innovative work of researchers and technologists who demonstrate the potential of the Internet to share valuable health resources. Their experiences and reflections show that the online medium can be used to bring people together and make a difference in the lives of healthy persons and patients. Challenges remain, beyond the reach of technology, before the benefits can be felt by all.

Health On the Net Foundation has played a leading role in the promotion of quality in health information, a prerequisite if the Internet is to be a trusted partner in our well-being. But the Internet is not only the world's greatest public library, it is the primary venue for global health information exchange: amongst doctors, between doctors and patients and from patient to patient, with new information sharing paradigms continually emerging. As a collaborative work tool, the Internet is now essential for biomedical research and for the development of health systems.

Advanced information retrieval technologies integrating scattered databases give new meaning to Knowledge Management.

Use of the Internet by healthcare consumers is not limited to public websites and information searching, but can be used to complement treatment in the form of online self-help support programs, and provide patients with access to telemedicine and other care and monitoring systems.

This special issue of IJMI takes stock of these and other trends in Internet use, presenting a selection of papers arranged in four sections: Internet usage statistics and demographics; Quality and security issues in e-Health; Promoting access for the disabled and impaired; and Empowering the patient and the care provider.

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