Foreword

From a practitioner's point of view, this encyclopedia offers a wealth of academic rigor in regard to the use of information technology in both clinical and health care administrative settings. Many people working in the field find they encounter challenges when using technology with the goal to improve patient outcomes. One key challenge is finding ways to financially support research, develop, implement, and sustain new health care delivery processes. There has been some success achieved in small local settings and in countries where there is an inherent culture for collaboration. But it seems that large macro national and international achievements are still very allusive. Unlike any other market sector, health care is one of the most universal. This is evident with its demanding and globally accepted academic standards. This leads one to believe that health care is a perfect candidate to continuously deliver world wide successes. So why is it such a challenge to realize large-scale improvements in health care using technology?

When trying to implement new health care technology initiatives, the financial challenge may be a symptom of a much deeper problem. Upon further analysis, one possibility is there is a gap between practitioners and researchers. Both these players have a vital role in transitioning an idea to realization in the use of technology in health care. A researcher provides the academic rigor and peer review to achieve consensus, whereas a practitioner uses experience to implement these ideas in the field and supply quality data to support enhanced patient outcomes. Through their joint efforts, a unique core competency can be formalized and designed for the ever growing knowledge-based economy, with the hope that these endeavors will produce effective and efficient enhancements in the health system; a system that supports physicians, nurses, and other health care givers in patient care without access or cost barriers. Removing any gaps between research and its practice may be the catalyst necessary to produce results that achieve international acceptance and justify funding for worldwide execution.

Building new partnerships between researchers and practitioners may be the beginning of a new era in applying technology in health care. New linkages can be formed where both groups are working together on the same project. The researcher views it as a data collection project to support their studies and the practitioner views the project to support their technology implementations. Success is measured on how quickly the partnership can achieve a positive and global impact in health care.

In addition to offering a wealth of knowledge on health care information systems for researchers to share ideas, this encyclopedia is an excellent resource for practitioners potentially seeking new partnerships. Using this publication, practitioners have a wonderful opportunity to read, discover, and contact researchers that can help accelerate global achievements in applying health care information systems.

In summary, the encyclopedia can be viewed as a starting point to help form new information technology partnerships that support the growth of the knowledge economy, remove barriers from care giving, and enhance health care delivery for the most important person: the patient.

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