# Foreword

I am delighted to write a foreword for this book on informatics in women's health—a first for women's health. I have known Emma and Dave for 10 or more years and admire their work in this field. They are in a unique position with their combined talents to bring this collection of articles together.

What do informatics offer to women's health? How can computers improve patient care? The amazing advances in IT have contributed to improvements in many aspects of modern life. This book, a first of many, outlines the contribution of computing to women's health.

Healthcare organizations have been keen to take up some aspects of the IT industry. Administration and clerical aspects of medical care such as clinic bookings, admission, and discharge have been computerized for many years. However involving IT in directly improving the care women receive has lagged. How IT can improve the care women receive is an immense topic which is at an embryonic stage—the subject of this book. This delay is due in part to the complexity of the issues but equally because the doctor and the IT consultant come from previously unrelated fields. In order for the full potential of the computers in medicine to be realized by these two diverse groups have to interact, a new subspecialty must emerge. This text is written by some of those in the forefront of this development.

Maternity care is one of the medical specialities more suited for computerization; there are many defined events with discrete beginning and end—pregnancy. Specialities such as gynaecology with repetitive admissions and complexity are far less amenable.

Fortunately for women's health, IT offers far more than just aiding hospital administration. Data collection, the logical first small step, is well established. These datasets range from retrospectively collected variables used to produce statistical analyses and reports, to comprehensive and prospectively collected patient notes. Additional exciting uses of IT in improving patient care are outlined in this collection.

This text is the first of what will be many in this field. I hope it inspires others as it does me and enable medical professionals and those in the IT industry to work together to improve care for women.

*Neil Pattison*
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*Neil Pattison is a specialist in obstetrics and gynaecology. He has an interest in high risk pregnancy and health informatics. He was the main instigator of one of the first perinatal databases in the world and has an ongoing interest in this area. Neil introduced both of the editors to this exciting field and was supervisor to Dr. Emma Parry for her MD which had a large health informatics component.*