Introduction to the International Medical Informatics Association

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Health informatics is a fast-growing discipline that applies information science and technology in the fields of health care and biomedical research. Therefore, it is important to share and collaborate on a global scale to advance the discipline. The International Medical Informatics Association (IMIA) which plays a major global role in promoting and furthering health and biomedical informatics is introduced here. The Korean Society of Medical Informatics (KOSMI), the publisher of Healthcare Informatics Research (HIR) is a member of the IMIA.

The basic goals and objectives of the IMIA are the following: to promote informatics in health care and research in health, bio, and medical informatics; to advance and nurture international cooperation; to stimulate research, development, and routine application; to move informatics from theory into practice in a full range of health delivery settings, from the clinician's office to acute and long-term care; to further the dissemination and exchange of knowledge, information, and technology; to promote education and responsible behavior; and to represent the medical and health informatics field with the World Health Organization (WHO) and other international professional and governmental organizations.

The IMIA was originally established in 1967 as Technical Committee 4 of the International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP). In 1979, it evolved from a Special Interest Group of the IFIP to its current status as a fully independent

organization. IMIA continues to maintain its relationship with IFIP as an affiliate organization.

IMIA membership comprises Member Societies, Institutional Members, Affiliate Members, and Honorary Fellows. *Member Societies* can be a society, a group of societies, or an appropriate body, representing the health and biomedical informatics activities within a country. Generally, only one member society may be admitted from a country. For example, the American Medical Informatics Association is the member society representing the United States, and KOSMI is the member society representing Korea in the IMIA. As of August 2013, there were 59 member societies. In a country where no representative society exists, IMIA accommodates involvement through corresponding membership, especially within developing countries. As of May 2013, there were 31 corresponding members. IMIA member societies may organize into regional groups. The IMIA now has regions that cover the whole of the globe: Latin America and the Caribbean (IMIA-LAC), Europe (EFMI), Asia/Pacific (APAMI), Africa (HELINA), North America (IMIA North America), and the Middle East (MEAHI). The KOSMI is a member of the APAMI.

Institutional Members belong to one of two categories, corporate or academic. Corporate institutional members include vendor, consulting, and technology firms as well as national professional organizations. The IMIA provides a unique environment to nurture networking opportunities—at an international level—for health information technology providers, consultants, and publishers. As of August 2013, there were 6 corporate institutional members. For example, IBM, Health On the Net (HON), and Siemens Medical Solutions are corporate member of the IMIA. Academic institutional members include universities, colleges, research foundations, and other

institutions that have academic or research programs in health and/or medical informatics. Academic members enjoy the opportunity to participate in IMIA's unique forum for collaboration with colleagues at other medical informatics academic centers for the exchange of ideas and research collaboration. As of September 2013, there were 44 academic institutional members.

Affiliate Members are international organizations that share an interest in the broad field of health and biomedical informatics. Currently, the IFIP, the International Federation of Health Information Management, and the WHO are Affiliate Members of the IMIA. The IMIA is also a Liaison A category organization in cooperation with the International Organization for Standardization.

Honorary Fellows are individuals who have demonstrated exceptional merit in furthering the aims and interests of the IMIA. Honorary fellowship is conferred for life.

The above mentioned IMIA members, including Member Societies, Institutional Members, Affiliate Members, and Honorary Fellows, collaborate to achieve the IMIA's objectives of contributing to the health and quality of life of the people of the world through the dissemination and use of informatics for high-quality, efficient health care and public health, and for high-quality research in biomedicine and in the health, information, and computer sciences.

The IMIA pursues its scientific activity in specific fields of the wider domain of health and biomedical informatics through Working Groups (WGs) and Special Interest Groups (SIGs). A WG or SIG comprises a group of experts with a particular interest. Currently, there are 24 WG and SIGs (Table 1). Activities of WG/SIGs include organizing business meetings at IMIA conferences or at IMIA regional meetings, publishing papers related to WG activities written by mem-

bers of WG/SIGs, and collaborating with other organizations within the IMIA or IMIA regional or member societies.

The IMIA organizes the internationally acclaimed "World Congress on Medical and Health Informatics", commonly known as MedInfo around the world. The event provides both a high-quality scientific exchange of current research and thinking in health and biomedical informatics, and an opportunity for formal meetings and informal networking among the IMIA members. The event is jointly hosted by the IMIA and one of its member societies. Previous MedInfos have been held in Stockholm (1974), Toronto (1977), Tokyo (1980), Amsterdam (1983), Washington (1986), Beijing/Singapore (1989), Geneva (1992), Vancouver (1995), Seoul (1998), London (2001), San Francisco (2004), Brisbane (2007), Cape Town (2010), and Copenhagen (2013). From 2015 onwards, MedInfo will be held once every two years. The next MedInfos will be held in Sao Paulo, Brazil in 2015 and Beijing, China in 2017.

The IMIA publishes the annual IMIA Yearbook of Medical Informatics and three additional official journals. The IMIA Yearbook of Medical Informatics is designed: to present an overview of the most original and excellent state-of-the-art research in the area of health and biomedical informatics of the past year; to provide surveys about recent developments and comprehensive reviews of relevant topics in the field; and to provide information about the IMIA itself. The IMIA's three official journals are *the International Journal of Medical Informatics*, *Methods of Information in Medicine*, and *Applied Clinical Informatics* (ACI). *The International Journal of Medical Informatics* provides an international medium for dissemination of original results and interpretative reviews concerning the field of medical informatics. The journal emphasizes the evaluation of systems in healthcare settings.

Table 1. List of the International Medical Informatics Association's 24 working groups and special interest groups

Biomedical Pattern Recognition	Medical Concept Representation
Consumer Health Informatics	Nursing Informatics SIG
Critical Care Informatics	Open Source Health Informatics
Data Mining and Big Data Analytics	Organizational and Social Issues
Francophone SIG	Primary Health Care Informatics
Health and Medical Informatics Education	Security in Health Information Systems
Health Geographical Information System	Smart Homes and Ambient Assisted Living
Health Informatics for Development	Social Media
Health Informatics for Patient Safety	Standards in Health Care Informatics
Health Information Systems	Technology Assessment & Quality Development in Health Informatics
Human Factors Engineering for Healthcare Informatics	Telehealth
Informatics in Genomic Medicine	Wearable Sensors in Healthcare

Methods of Information in Medicine is the “science” and research” journal of the IMIA. The journal has stressed the methodology and scientific fundamentals of organizing, representing, and analyzing data, information, and knowledge in biomedicine and health care. *ACI* is the “practical” journal of the IMIA. The core editorial subject matters of *ACI* are clinical information systems, administrative management systems, e-Health systems, information technology develop-

ment, deployment, and evaluation, socio-technical aspects of information technology, and health IT training.

The KOSMI, as a member society of the IMIA, and HIR, as the official journal of the KOSMI, have room to improve as an organization and an academic journal. The IMIA’s goals and objectives, its membership structure, WG and SIG activities, international conferences, and publications have important implications for the KOSMI and HIR.