

More than 500 clinicians, librarians, knowledge engineers, software designers, health plan administrators, medical informaticians, nurses, and other health care professionals gathered in Philadelphia May 27–30 for the American Medical Informatics Association's (AMIA) 1998 Spring Congress to explore the challenges in "Bringing Knowledge to the Point of Use." The meeting was in part a joint effort; AMIA collaborated with the Medical Library Association (MLA) to offer a special day-long program to develop a health informatics research agenda for the twenty-first century and with the Partnerships for Consumer Health Information (Partnerships) program of the US Department of Health and Human Services to present a technology showcase, which displayed local innovative technology, developing systems, and evolving applications dedicated to consumer and patient health information. On the last day and a half of the congress, AMIA surveyed contemporary thought on clinical knowledge-based systems via scientific paper sessions, panel discussions, theater-style demonstrations as well as its newest format—educational updates.

Tutorials and Site Tours

To prepare attendees for this intensive look at the use of clinical information at the point of care, AMIA conducted tutorials and site tours, both of which drew heavy participation. In the tutorials, attendees learned about the practical issues in knowledge engineering for the electronic medical record (EMR); human factors analysis as a mechanism to evaluate EMR systems; patient-centered, computer-based information and support systems; and new communication technologies for Web-based health information systems. The site tours, one to the Crozer-Chester Medical Center's Department of Family Practice and one to the University of Pennsylvania, provided attendees with demonstrations of clinical information systems currently in use. The Crozer-Chester tour, sponsored by AMIA's Family Practice/Primary Care Working Group, gave participants the chance to view the implementation of an EMR system. In addition to demonstrating more than a dozen applications and medical informatics systems, University of Pennsylvania hosts offered excursions to their Center for Human Modeling and Simulation, Department of Radiology 3D imaging sites, and Clinical Research Computing Unit.

Opening Session and Debate

Program Chair James R. Campbell, MD, opened the Spring Congress with an upbeat slide presentation and tour through the history of knowledge system development. Pioneers of artificial intelligence research, researchers exploring literature and knowledge retrieval, and innovations in knowledge access via the Web were all discussed. This set the stage for the debate that followed on the resolution: "Generalized Knowledge-based Clinical Systems Will Not Achieve Widespread Successful Use Within the Near Future." Charles P. Friedman, PhD, and Patricia Flatley Brennan, RN, PhD, argued the affirmative; William R. Hersh, MD, and Randolph Miller, MD, argued the negative with a little help from Dr. Miller's daughter, Sarah. Ms. Miller nearly stole the show when she rattled off 2,000 years of "literature supporting our point" in fine auctioneer style. Both sides presented compelling arguments, with Friedman and Brennan stating that while clinical systems may be widely accepted one day, it would not be anytime soon due to the many cultural barriers we face. Miller and Hersh argued that, with the technology already in place, widespread use would occur within five years.

Technology Showcase

Following a late afternoon round of scientific sessions, Partnerships for Networked Consumer Health Information opened its Technology Showcase. The showcase featured demonstrations of the latest on-line health care resources for consumers, including the newly enhanced healthfinder™, the official federal consumer health gateway. Developers from both public and private sector sites engaged attendees and encouraged them to explore their sites with the idea that the self-care community and the medical informatics community need to work together to ensure that accurate, authoritative, and accessible information is available to the consumer/patient. Attendees eagerly examined the workstations, which focused on telehealth applications for the home, health promotion and disease prevention, self-care, and decision support.

As part of the Technology Showcase, Partnerships organized the Consumer Health Informatics Games, an informal competition designed to encourage the development of high-quality applications. The Games were sponsored by the Annenberg School for Communication and Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania. Cited for outstanding quality were Baby Care Link, of the Center for Clinical Computing at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center; Health Promotion for Young Adults,

a joint project from the University of Illinois and the University of Pennsylvania; Interactive Health Education, from ManTech Systems Engineering Corporation; and NOAH: New York Online Access to Health, from the City University of New York. The Cyberspace Telemedical Office of Digital Medical Inc., received the Paradigm Leap Award. Annenberg Dean Kathleen Hall Jamieson, PhD, presented the awards. AMIA Corporate Member SMS sponsored the prizes awarded to the winners of a raffle drawing.

AMIA would like to express its gratitude to SMS, which also sponsored the Welcome Reception, and to Annenberg, which sponsored the Thursday evening reception.



Participants in the 1998 Spring Congress Research Day, a collaborative effort between AMIA, the Medical Library Association, and the Partnerships for Consumer Health Information program of the US Dept. of Health and Human Services, included (l to r) Program Chair James R. Campbell, MD, Julie McGowan, MLS, PhD, Robert M. Braude, PhD, Kathleen Hall Jamieson, PhD, Victor J. Strecher, PhD, and AMIA President Paul D. Clayton, PhD.

Joint Plenary and Research Day

The goal of this day of collaboration between AMIA, MLA, and Partnerships was to set a research agenda for a new millennium in which medical informaticians and medical librarians would work together regarding approaches to knowledge creation, management, and dissemination. Julie McGowan, MLS, PhD, moderated the joint plenary, which featured presentations by Sherrilynne Fuller, PhD, Alejandro Jadad, MD, DPhil, and William Tierney, MD. Representing AMIA, MLA, and Partnerships respectively, Paul D. Clayton, PhD, Robert M. Braude, PhD, and Victor J. Strecher, PhD, MPH, gave five-minute responses at the end of each presentation. Question and answer periods enabled attendees to contribute to the discussion, making the plenary a dynamic and interactive event.

Dr. Fuller spoke on "The Virtual Library: Literature-Based Knowledge Acquisition." She examined the meaning of literature-based knowledge, improving retrieval precision, how to validate content, intelligent user interfaces, and building collaborative research. Despite the differences between librarians, who have a user-service focus, and informaticians, who are research and issue-oriented, Dr. Fuller stated that a team approach will help both groups achieve their goals with regard to the Web. She indicated that there is ample research funding available to anyone interested in the areas she discussed.

In his presentation, "The Future of Consumer Information: Developing Resources for Patients," Dr. Jadad examined the challenges in using the Web