Focus on the Frontiers of Informatics: Call for Papers on Telehealth and the Informatics of Medical Imaging

Special sections in JAMIA provide a method of focusing attention on an important development in medical informatics. The organization of such a section, and the type of papers that should be included, varies according to the type of development that is being presented, as demonstrated by the sections that have appeared during the journal's formative years.

The section of reports from the Canon Group addressed the unsolved challenge of medical concept representation. Given the emerging nature of work in this area, the section used a position paper as a call for action. Absent definitive studies that would document how to meet the challenge, the section's research papers presented methods in detail, and applied the methods to the same test case across papers so that the reader could judge overlap and differences in strategy. A final paper, written collectively by several authors of the research reports, suggested how the strategies might be merged into a unifying framework.

The section of reports on informatics as an infrastructure for quality of care dealt with the need for integration of quality assessment, outcome analysis, decision science, and system design. A review paper format was used to frame topics so that individuals who did not normally work in any area could understand its principles. The selection of topics served to show how the various types of work might be integrated. While the authors and their work were based in a single discipline, nursing, the papers addressed concepts relevant to the informatics community at large. In this way, the section presented the critical mass of informatics work necessary to get the attention of nurse researchers outside of the field, while raising the awareness amongst the informatics community at large of this application area in which nursing has discipline-specific needs.

The recent section on education and informatics was intended as a call for collaboration between those two research communities. Such a union is essential because education in the health professions is completely intertwined with practice. The section used application of technology papers to report the current state of use of information technology in medical education. One described the potential use of information management to support learning environments, thereby making clear that this application domain presents challenges similar to those of systems to support practice. A report of a technical milestone and a selected research study were used to show the types of innovation and investigation that are needed in this area.

Telehealth and the Informatics of Medical Imaging have been selected by the JAMIA editorial board as the topics of the next two special sections. These selections reflect the maturing nature of technology in these areas, together with their importance as tools for adapting to the new health care environment. Taken together, these sections should also serve to further the understanding of the distinction between "computer medicine" and medical informatics. Computers and computation are the tools of medical informatics, not the centerpiece of the field. Nowhere is this distinction clearer than when computation is used to en-
able new strategies for communication and visualization.

The Telehealth section is being organized by Michael Ackerman, Patricia Brennan, and Betsy Humphreys. The theme of the AMIA 1996 Spring Conference is Conquering Distance: Teleinformatics, Telemedicine, and Telehealth. Manuscripts will be solicited directly from individuals who submit abstracts for that conference and from others to cover key topics. Individuals who would like to see their work highlighted in such a section are encouraged to submit a manuscript by June 1, 1996, whether or not they submitted an abstract for the conference.

The section on the Informatics of Medical Imaging is being organized by C. Carl Jaffe and Casimir Kulikowski. They have identified the following areas of interest: requirements for medical imaging databases; knowledge-based imaging; representation of image content and semantics; image-based computer-aided diagnosis; informatics in picture archival and communication systems; World Wide Web and medical image accessibility; natural language and encoded descriptions of medical images; Visible Human and structural anatomy reference datasets; network-accessed image collections; multimedia databases; medical image processing; image compression; time-series imaging; and visual reporting. Individuals who want to see their work highlighted in this section should submit a manuscript by September 1, 1996.

Manuscripts for the Telehealth and the Informatics of Medical Imaging sections should be submitted to the JAMIA editorial office. They should be prepared and submitted as outlined in the Information for Authors in the January/February issue of the Journal. Although deadlines for receipt of manuscripts are not a part of the routine JAMIA process, they are necessary for these sections so that we receive a concentration of material on the selected topics at one time. All material will be refereed via the JAMIA peer-review process.

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References


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