

Editorial to JHIA Vol. 5 (2018) Issue 2

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The HELINA 2018 Conference

The 11th HELINA (HEaLth INformatics in Africa) conference was organized from 3 to 5 December 2018 in Nairobi, Kenya. The conference was hosted and organized by the Kenya Health Informatics Association (KeHIA). HELINA 2018 was co-located and held back to back with the popular OpenMRS implementers meeting. The conference focused on how technology is used to strengthen health systems in the African region. Issues of specific interest included the development and implementation of integrated e-Health plans and policies that enable capacity building for eHealth professionals, improving quality of health information and promotion of the meaningful use of health data to support and ground decision-making, improving access to essential medical supplies through improved supply chain and logistics, development of sustainable health information systems for service delivery and innovative health financing models that improve access to health. The role of digital health in health surveillance systems particularly due to emerging health threats including Non-Communicable Diseases, and therefore, the core participatory role of the client in detection, response, treatment and care. Special attention will be paid to the role of e-Health in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) voted by the UN in September 2015 and more specifically to goal 9, target 9c which aims to “*Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in the least developed countries by 2020*”.

The Conference Themes

The call for submissions for HELINA 2018 covered a broad range of health informatics topics with relevance for Africa under the title “*Harnessing the potential of Digital Health Technology to build hardened, sustainable and learning health systems*”. Academic research papers, work in progress papers, and case study/experience papers were solicited within the following themes:

- National and Regional e-Health Strategies and Policies
- Health Information Systems Interoperability
- Continuous Quality Improvement and use of health data and systems
- Human capacity building for e-Health
- Application of technology in supply chain management
- Sustainable ICT-solutions for health service delivery
- Technology enabled health financing

Submissions of papers that fell outside any of these themes were also acceptable as long as they demonstrated any relevance for the health informatics domain in Africa.

Review process

After a call for papers was sent out a total of 76 submissions were received. A double blind peer review process was used for evaluating each paper. All submissions were anonymized before being submitted to at least 2 reviewers according to their expertise. The SPC chairs based their final decision on the acceptance of each submission on the recommendations and comments from reviewers. Accepted submissions were then sent back to the authors for revision according to the reviewers’ comments. This review

process resulted in the following acceptance rates:

Full research papers: 16% (n=12)

Work in progress papers: 8% (n=6)

Case studies and experience papers: 43% (n=33)

Rejected or retracted papers: 33% (n=25)

In order to be included in the conference proceedings, an accepted paper had to be presented at the conference. Presentations at the conference indicated that a lot of work is being done towards harnessing the potential of technology systems to build sustainable health systems.

Nicky Mostert
HELINA 2018 SPC Chair