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## EDITORIAL

### The Metamorphosis of the Indian Journal of Medical Informatics

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#### Abstract

Medical informatics can be called the art and science of processing biomedical or healthcare information. It can include: clinical informatics, nursing informatics, imaging informatics, consumer health informatics, public health informatics, dental informatics, clinical research informatics, veterinary informatics, and pharmacy informatics. Conventionally, bioinformatics (proteomics, genomics and drug design) is not included in its general purview.

After our initial experiments with the print version, we have now evolved to a peer reviewed, online-only and open access version. We intend to present a journal that is freely accessible to all readers with a quick turnaround time for manuscripts. The Indian Journal of Medical Informatics will consider a wide range of submissions covering the theory, practice and outcomes of healthcare informatics with special emphasis on conditions similar to those prevailing in India.

#### Background

How does a professional society [1] reach out to the greater world? A scientific journal [2] is one well-known platform for this purpose. It was this idea that was put in black and white by a 4-year old Indian Association for Medical Informatics (IAMI) in 1997, as a resolution proposed by Nanduri Gajanana Rao, one of the founding members and the first Vice-President of IAMI, and adopted by the General Body as an objective of the association. However, it took another six years to find a suitable editor (Sanjay Bedi) and associate editor (yours truly) to kick-start such an initiative. During the Biennial Conference IAMI-2003, the two of us were entrusted to start a print journal, with nominal seed money from IAMI. It took us a long seven months to get the basic infrastructure and a few articles in place.

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The inaugural issue (Volume 1 Number 1) [3] was formally released by the then President of IAMI - O P Sharma, during the mid-term Conference of IAMI in Kolkata in May 2004. The next logical step was to get the ISSN for Indian Journal of Medical Informatics. The ISSN 0973-0379 was finally assigned to our journal. A second issue (Volume 1 Number 2) [4] was brought out in December 2004. However, the logistical problems of getting the journal printed and circulated (with an increase in the number of life members of IAMI) started to become overwhelming. This unfortunate circumstance persisted despite the formation of a new editorial board, once again led by Sanjay Bedi, in August 2006. By the middle of 2007, Sanjay Bedi passed over the Editor-in-Chief's mantle to me.

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## The Metamorphosis

The lessons learnt from the issues that we faced with the print version, made us look for better alternatives. The current editorial board decided to forge a new path in the history of the Indian Journal of Medical Informatics by converting it into an online only “open access journal” [5]. The editorial team believes that this approach, consistent with the latest trends in biomedical publishing, will expand the reach of the Indian Journal of Medical Informatics and allow it to fulfill its mission of being a repository for outstanding work from contributors worldwide. The rapid technological advent, reduction in web hosting charges and the steady and incremental access to the entire Internet has paved the way for the Indian Journal of Medical Informatics becoming an “Open Access Journal”.

With the able support from the Associate Editors – Ajit N Babu and Vasumathi Sriganesh, and the technical backing from the indefatigable Sukhdev Singh, the online avatar of Indian Journal of Medical Informatics has made a fresh appearance. The new venture has been blessed by the warm encouragement from our International Advisors – Vimla Patel and Ralph R Grams from USA, Diana Schmidt from Germany, Frank Lievens from Belgium and Pradeep Ray from Australia – who have kindly consented to be on our Advisory team.

Another Biennial Conference of IAMI is round the corner – IAMI-2007. It is indeed an inspirational opportunity for us that Edward Shortliffe has kindly consented to physically grace the occasion of the appearance of the reborn, online-only Indian Journal of Medical Informatics. The current President of IAMI, S B Gogia and the incumbent Secretary of the IAMI, S B Bhattacharyya, have arranged for the infrastructure necessary for hosting Indian Journal of Medical Informatics on the Web. The advantages of using the Web, if not already self-evident, will become apparent to you all once you realize the wonderfully interactive tool it affords [6]. Debates on papers can be posted along with referees’ criticisms, if they so desire. Commentaries [7] can be put up online, as done in BioMed Central’s *Journal of Biology*.

We are committed to the updated “Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts (URM)” (popularly known as the Vancouver style [8]) and will closely follow the basic principles of open access

publications as exemplified by Biomed Central [6] and the Public Library of Science [9]. We shall adhere to the “Editorial Policy Statements” produced by the The Council of Science Editors [10].

I had written a Guest Editorial [11] for the Journal of the Indian Medical Association about 12 years back. No doubt that the world has progressed a lot since then – but the rise in informatics awareness of the healthcare delivery personnel has not been proportional [12, 13]. It is high time that we address the issue more seriously – from the policy making to the awareness training and this journal hopes to purvey a stage for that.

### What will it contain?

I have had a particularly pleasant experience [14] with Open Access publication and hope to offer the same to the contributors to Indian Journal of Medical Informatics. We aim to make the Indian Journal of Medical Informatics a high quality (peer reviewed) open access journal that will publish papers quickly. The Indian Journal of Medical Informatics promises to serve the wide domains for all possible applications of healthcare informatics with special emphasis on conditions similar to those prevailing in India.

We would encourage potential authors to submit high-quality manuscripts related to the entire gamut of clinical informatics, nursing informatics, imaging informatics, consumer health informatics, public health informatics, dental informatics, clinical research informatics, veterinary informatics, and pharmacy informatics. Further we would welcome articles related to the methodologies and applications of tele-health (e-Health and Telemedicine), especially under diverse regional and socio-economic backgrounds. However, we do not intend to publish articles in the domains of hard core Bioinformatics (proteomics, genomics and drug design).

### Benefits to the authors and readers

The journal will be interactive. Being “Open Access”, all the articles can be accessed and disseminated freely, immediately without any reprint costs. Further, at present we do not plan to charge the authors for processing. Peer review criticisms can be published alongside articles and running commentaries can be made on published papers. There will be no restriction on length, albeit brief and succinct papers would be preferred, not only

by the editors, but also by the readers! Color illustrations can be used as extensively as required. We believe that there is tremendous scope for interdisciplinary articles covering all the intersections of informatics, health sciences and telecommunications.

## Call for papers

We encourage original research submissions but will not accept substandard articles. Peer review will be rigorous, but we do not intend to throw the baby down the drain. The authors are requested to read the [Author Guidelines for Online Submissions](#) thoroughly. It will be nice if the potential authors also kindly take the trouble of using the "PubMed Single Citation Matcher" [15] for verifying the References cited in the manuscripts. Please come and join the bandwagon!

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