Updating the Educational Recommendations in Biomedical and Health Informatics

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The development of educational recommendations can be considered as a cumbersome and consensus-driven approach as it tries to merge across different cultural and educational paradigms over continents. Now if we add the dimension of the field of biomedical and health informatics which is considered as both interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary one can understand the huge task that IMIA has undertaken in the recent decade when the initial recommendations were developed and published.

IMIA as an association of national societies in the field of biomedical and health informatics already knew how to tackle such difficult tasks as it had already established working groups to work together to tackle specific scientific tasks. One of the most well-known working groups is the Working Group on Education with many successful stories in organizing workshops and conferences providing guidance to many educators in the field as well as a forum for exchanging ideas and experiences in implementing educational programs at corresponding institutions, universities and organizations. In 2007 the IMIA Board decided to review the existing recommendations [1] developed in 1998 due to the changes in the field. So the best approach was to form a task force out of the existing members of the working group on education.

As the original document of the educational recommendations was considered a milestone document; the task force decided to work on it by providing updating in most sections of the document, by introducing new approaches and sections but without amending the original structure and rationale of the document. The purpose was to gain from both worlds to keep the tradition and knowledge of the original and to add to it the state-of-the-art scientific knowledge and current events in the field of biomedical and health informatics. It was evident that advancement of bioinformatics, wearable technologies, nanotechnology as well as new upcoming structures in the healthcare domain such as primary care, home and community care as well as personalized care should find a place within the new recommendations.

The task force divided its work into sections and each section was tackled by a team of experts. The draft result of each section was reviewed by three peer reviewers of the team providing feedback and suggestions trying also to bridge the content of the document between the sections. The overall document in the end was thoroughly reviewed by the leader of the task force as well as the editor of the current journal.

The task force members feel that the current revised version of the educational recommendations [2] fulfill the needs of the educators in the field to support, maintain, amend or even establish educational programs in the field of biomedical and health informatics. As the previous document was successful to reach countries and continents and to become the originator seed of educational efforts the same way our members feel that the current document will enhance current and future activities.

As all documents providing recommendations the same is with this document; the reader should try to use it as a recommendation and not as a 'rigid' document. One may use it in the implementations in his
country and ‘localize’ it to his needs. The members of the working group on education encourage national societies to translate the document to their own language to facilitate the dissemination in their countries. Hence, the dissemination plans by all parties involved are an important aspect for the success of these educational recommendations. In the end, the measurable impact of these recommendations is the number of educational programs running across the world, the new students entering our field of biomedical and health informatics, and the number of professionals educated and trained in this field. The accreditation process of these programs is an issue that IMIA is considering but of course this is another effort.

As all recommendations we also envisage that also these updated recommendations will require in the future updating to keep them current with the upcoming scientific evolution of the future times. Our field is a dynamic one; therefore, the education should be in line with all new knowledge developing and being updated.

References