REPORT OF THE REGIONAL VP: HELINA

Ghislain Kouematchoua Tchuitcheu

Overview

1. HELINA strategy
HELINA’s board is working on the finalisation of the HELINA strategy. The following active members of the strategy task force established in 2012 started the development process in 2013:

Ghislain Kouematchoua (Chair)
Rosemary Foster (Vice chair)
Christopher Seebregts
Lyn Hanmer

A first draft of the strategy was produced after the brainstorming meeting organised during HELINA 2013 in Eldoret, Kenya. The current HELINA board decided last year to review the draft strategy and finalize the strategy document. The updated strategy document was sent to HELINA’s members for their comments and will be adopted in a virtual GA this year.

2. HELINA 2017 Conference
The Conference attracted 198 participants from 21 nationalities. The pre-conference workshops had 83 participants and was appreciated just as the case in Accra, Ghana in 2015. HELINA plans to maintain this model. However, participant feedback was positive and quite enthusiastic. There was weak political backing for the conference, evident in the very few representatives from the Ministry of Health.

3. Use of IMIA support funds
IMIA supported this year’s HELINA conference with USD 5000. These funds were used as follows:
- Partial support for Air tickets for 2 participant: USD 1849.07
- Conference registration for 2 researchers: USD 300
- Airline ticket and accommodation for Data Mining and Big data Analytics lecturer: USD 1226
- Partial support for the accommodation for 1 researcher: USD 300
- Partial support for the Conference Management System, Conference Proceeding and Best papers publication: USD 1324.93

4. HELINA General Assembly 2017
The General Assembly was held in the main Conference Room, La Panoramique Hotel, Bujumbura, Burundi during the HELINA 2017 conference on 24th April, 2017. About twelve (12) countries were present

The Board presented a report of its activities, as well as reports from the Working Groups (WG) to members present. There was a report on the Nursing Informatics Special Interest Group (SIG) formation and the proposed conference in 2018.

Various issues discussed, included setting up the HELINA Secretariat in Ghana and the call to host HELINA 2018. Participants asked questions on how countries can organise to bid for the HELINA conference.

Member associations present gave brief reports about their activities. There were reports from Burundi, Kenya and Rwanda.

A communication challenge between the Board and members was raised regarding members failure to respond to issues forwarded to their attention. Members renewed their commitment to give HELINA issues some focus.

The Kenya Health Informatics Association (KeHIA) indicated it had submitted a letter of intent to bid to host MEDINFO 2021. The presentation at the GA was made by Dr. Tom Oluoch (President of KeHIA) on behalf of the Association. The Bid and accompanying issues were discussed after which KeHIA decided to cancel the current bid and prepare for a future bid.

Financing HELINA has been challenging over the years. This issue was raised for discussion to determine funding sources to help with HELINA activities. A committee on financing was set up to come up with a strategy for financing HELINA.

5. HELINA Education Working Group


One of the WG members Aurore Nishimwe presented a paper “Assessment of Health Informatics Competencies in Undergraduate Training of Healthcare Professionals in Rwanda” using the IMIA Recommendations on Education as the tool for her survey. It showed a high appropriateness for the use of the recommendations. Dr Frank Verbeke and Profs Marc Nyssen and Graham Wright had also used the IMIA Education Recommendations together with the IMIA Knowledge Base to evaluate a postgraduate programme in Rwanda with success.

Earlier this year the IMIA Board asked Chris Lehmann and Sabine Koch to oversee and update the current IMIA Recommendations on Education. Co-authors of the current document have been invited to participate including the Education WG Chair.

This situation was presented at the Education WG meeting and Aurore offered to email the members present (40+) a copy of the IMIA paper and her work. It was agreed that the Chair would undertake a literature review of the use of the IMIA Education Recommendations in Africa and that has been completed and the results sent to members. A request has been made to the recipients to comment on the appropriateness of the recommendations for Africa so that the Chair can forward a response to the IMIA review team. It would appear that the IMIA Recommendations on Education have an important role to play in Africa, which is only now catching up with the formalisation of Health Informatics education. The HELINA Education WG has an opportunity to influence the review.

HELINA Education WG website http://wg-education.helina-online.org/
LinkedIn Group https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8274552
Youtube repository HI Videos https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXagzt4NPZvj9FYYYtbHc5vQ

6. HELINA Data Mining and Big Data Analytics Working Group

Within the preconference meetings and workshops, on Sunday 23rd April 2017, a tutorial was organized by the WG and lectured by the Chair, Dr. Georges Nguefack-Tsague on “Introduction to data mining and big data analytics methods and techniques” from 9:00 AM-12:30 AM. The tutorial was followed by
questions, answers, and discussions. There were 50 participants from Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, DRC, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Rwanda, and Tanzania. Participants were very enthusiastic about data mining and appreciated the course content.

After this tutorial, Dr. Georges Nguetack-Tsague also conducted from a hands-on training session on “Putting data warehousing and data mining into practice”. This practical session focused on “Application of data mining methods on real world African health data sets”. The training followed the main recommendation of participants of the workshop on “Data Mining and Big Data Analytics” held in Accra, Ghana on March 7, 2015. Data for the practical training contained 20 million medical records from patients from West and Central Africa: Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, DRC and Mali. These data were collected at the point of care with the open source integrated hospital information management system OpenClinic GA. The R package Rattle software was used during that session. The session included Problem Understanding, Data Understanding, Data Preparation, Modeling, Evaluation, and Deployment. The building models included Predictive Analytics, Cluster Analysis, Association Analysis, Decision Trees, Random Forests, Boosting, and Support Vector Machines.

A meeting of the WG was organized on Tuesday, 25th April Where 25 participants from 5 nationalities (Belgium, Burundi, DRC, Guinea, and Rwanda) enrolled as members of the WG members.

7. HELINA Nursing Special Interest Group

The Nursing SIG has started to raise interest in Nursing Informatics within Africa and wish to thank the support of the HELINA Board and in particular Dr Ghislain Kouematchoua, the Chairman.

The group had a high presence at the HELINA 2017 conference “Integrated Health Information Management Resources for Global HealthCare Strategies” in Bujumbura, Burundi, April 2017. The NSIG Chair, Prof Graham Wright presented the Keynote address “Mobile ICT-tools for nurses in rural clinics” at the opening of the conference.

Dr Ghislain Kouematchoua introduced the members of the HELINA Nursing SIG panel to a full audience of 200 plus. He reiterated the Board’s commitment to having Nursing included in all future HELINA conferences and gave a brief overview of the importance of training Nurses in Informatics within Africa. Dr Evelyn Hovenga, a Nursing Informatics Professor from Australia presented an overview of Nursing Informatics as a discipline and its place in Health.

The video is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qyZp4SKaTwk

The panel consisting of Dr Frank Verbeke, Dr Helen Wright and Prof Graham Wright spent over an hour answering questions in English and French to an enthusiastic audience. One of the main outcomes was a motion that the International Classification for Nursing Practice (ICNP) system be adopted in Africa.

The International Classification for Nursing Practice (ICNP), a product of the International Council of Nurses (ICN), is a formal terminology endorsed by WHO. It provides a dictionary of terms and an expressive relationship that nurses can use to describe and report their practice in a systematic way. The resulting information is used reliably to support care and effective decision-making, and inform nursing education, research and health policy. ICNP is intended for use by and for nurses. It is a rich and comprehensive resource that nurses can use to describe and report in detail the things that they assess (diagnoses e.g. nausea) and the things that they provide (interventions e.g. counselling).

Dr Frank Verbeke confirmed that the ICNP would be introduced to all the OpenClinic GA systems in Africa, a major initiative, which was supported with enthusiasm.

8. News from the national societies

Cameroon

The Sixth Cameroonian day of Medical Informatics will be organized from November 14 to 15, 2017, in Yaounde, Cameroon. The main topic of the conference is “Social network and medical practice in Cameroon”.

Côte d'Ivoire
The Ivorian Society of Biosciences and Health Informatics has elected a new board headed by Dr. Innocent Nanan. They are working on the implementation of 3 projects: eHealth training; hospital beds availability enhancing through telemedicine; membership and fundraising.

Kenya

Kenya Health Informatics Association (KeHIA) carried out the following key activities between the period Oct 2016 to July 2017:

- KeHIA organized and co-hosted the second in a series symposium whose focus was "Digital health assets/investments in Kenya; A look into the past and future". More than 50 people attended the one day meeting and they represented: Government of Kenya (Ministry of Health, Ministry of ICT), academia, research institutions, development and implementing partners, private companies, students.

- KeHIA co-hosted 2 workshops with MEASURE Evaluation to review, validate and refine a global tool called the interoperability Capability Maturity Model (iCMM) and Guidelines for mHealth Data Security and Privacy.

- KeHIA has steadfastly and consistently supported the MOH in Kenya through multiple Technical Working Groups focused on specific goals like developing a Kenya Health Observatory, Kenya Health Enterprise Architecture, bootcamps and hackathons aimed at developing digital health solutions, etc.

9. HELINA 2018

The Board of the Pan African Health Informatics Association invited Health Informatics Associations in Africa to bid for HELINA 2018. The conference is expected to be held in the second half of the year, between August and November 2018.

10. Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the WG chairs Prof Graham Wright and Dr. Georges Nguefack-Tsague, and HELINA secretary Frances da-Costa Vroom for their contribution to this report.