Introduction

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Biographical notes: Carla Wiggins is an Associate Professor at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee. She received her Doctorate in Health Services Research, Policy, and Administration from the University of Minnesota. She has a broad and ongoing interest in the use of information technology in the management of healthcare organisations. Her research explores the adoption, use and barriers to the use of Electronic Medical Records by providers and by health organisations. She is co-author of a healthcare management text book and has published a number of health management case studies and teaching notes.

It is indeed a pleasure to present four of the best papers from the 2010 Hawaii Conference on System Sciences' (HICSS) minitrack on IT Adoption, Implementation, Use and Evaluation in Healthcare. Each of these papers has been substantially revised and updated, and has gone through an additional refereeing process since its initial presentation at HICSS. The additional fifth paper provides an in-depth perspective into the adoption and diffusion of IT in healthcare by the co-Chairs of this minitrack.

HICSS is the oldest international system science conference, and its Health Care track is the oldest of the HICSS tracks. The 'IT Adoption, Implementation, Use, and Evaluation in Healthcare' minitrack is arguably the most noted minitrack at the conference; it is the longest running consistent track dedicated to this focused topic in the field of information systems. Conferences such as HICSS serve as first airings of studies and streams of research thought that later make their way into refereed journals. Thus conference papers and presentations are often ahead of the curve in respect to the momentum in a discipline.

Each of the four papers presented in this special issue addresses the adoption and use of healthcare information technology, yet each addresses the topic from a unique perspective: together they are illustrative of the true international flavour of this minitrack. In the first paper, Blinn, Kühne, and Nüttgen explore the content of German sickness fund internet sites. In their paper 'Are public and private health insurance companies going Web 2.0?', they ask the questions: What information or content is provided?, and How is it provided and by whom? Next, addressing the deployment of an e-health service innovation in the Netherlands called 'myofeedback', Kijl and Nieuwenhuis' paper 'Deploying e-health service innovations – an early stage business model engineering and regulatory validation approach' proposes a business model for health IT innovations and refines it into four design cycles.

With the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) as its foundation, 'Taxonomy for multi-perspective assessment of the value of health information systems', by Swiss researchers Fitterer, Mettler, Rohner, and Winter, contributes a detailed understanding of domain-specific HIS value indicators. The fourth offering, 'Patient perceptions of electronic medical records: physician satisfaction, portability, security and quality of care', by US authors Sibona, Walczak, Brickey, and Parthasarathy, asks whether patient satisfaction is affected by the use of computers in the exam room and whether these patients perceive differences in the utility of care with, versus without, the use of electronic medical records.

The additional fifth paper in this special issue is authored by the IT Adoption, Implementation, Use and Evaluation in Healthcare minitrack co-Chairs. 'Back to the future of IT adoption and evaluation in healthcare' reviews the current literature and presents an expert panel's assessments of HIT adoption and diffusion issues. Our research framework explores three main areas of e-health research (EMR, Clinical/Administrative systems, and Telehealth) at three different levels (individual, organisational, and systems). Current achievements, on-going challenges, and future possibilities are presented.

The healthcare industry and the information technology industry are two of the most complex, fast moving, and chaotic industries in the world today. Where these two industries intersect is an exciting, challenging, and rewarding place for a researcher to be. The areas of inquiry, from broad national perspectives down to the smallest details of who uses what and why, are not only limitless, but they are worthy of our most dedicated efforts. It is my sincere hope that the work presented in this special issue inspires us all to continue in this very worthy endeavour: inquiry into the adoption, implementation, use, and evaluation of IT in healthcare.