



Revolutionizing Health Care with Informatics: From Research to Practice

February 19 – 22, 2009, Delta's Laurel Point Inn, Victoria, BC, Canada

An international conference addressing Information Technology and Communications in Health (ITCH)

HISTORY of the CONFERENCES

Formerly Information Technology in Community Health conferences, now expanded to **Information Technology and Communications in Health (ITCH)**

In March 1986 a Canadian colloquium with an international flavor addressed the impact of information technology on Community Health. It was sponsored by the School of Health Information Science and the British Columbia Ministry of Health. Notable speakers were Salah Mandil, Director, Information Systems Service, WHO, Geneva, Switzerland and Stan Dubas, the Deputy Minister of Health for British Columbia. This small, successful gathering was the predecessor of the ITCH (Information Technology in Community Health) conferences which followed in 1987, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1998 and 2000. The Canadian Public Health Association joined with the School of Health Information Science as co-sponsors for these seven conferences.

ITCH '87: TODAY'S CHALLENGES - TOMORROW'S SOLUTIONS drew about 120 registrants to Victoria in November, 1987. Registrants came from across Canada, the USA, and overseas to hear 26 presentations. Plenary addresses were from Sweden and the USA. The conference addressed general/managerial issues, applications, and the future. Evaluation following the conference indicated overwhelming approval and provided many suggestions for future conferences.

ITCH '88: HARNESSING THE POWER OF INFORMATION was held in Vancouver during November, 1988. The 24 papers delivered at the conference illustrated the various mediums for collecting, managing and using information at the Community Health level. There was a practical orientation to the papers selected to provide concrete examples of Community Health Information Technology. Participants acquired practical tools and skills for their management repertoire. The plenary presenters were selected for their ability to put global concerns into practical applications relevant to community health practitioners. Education was the primary goal of the conference.

ITCH '90: IMPROVING COMMUNITY HEALTH THROUGH APPLIED TECHNOLOGY was held in Victoria in October, 1990. This conference became truly international on the basis of participation with presenters and registrants from many places. Information technology to address developing world health concerns became a focus. Participants from China, India, Central America and Eastern Europe gave important presentations. There were 47 presenters and over 100 participants. AIDS and information systems, computer aided quick response teams, technology used to assist in the education and rehabilitation of people, and information systems for community health assessment and planning were some of the topics covered. Practical solutions to common problems was the focus of this conference.

ITCH '92: BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS IN COMMUNITY HEALTH THROUGH APPLIED TECHNOLOGY, was held at the Victoria Conference Centre from October 18 to 21 1992. Important advances in Information Technology in the areas of communications and information distribution were discussed. The conference focused on how these emerging technologies can link people and organizations in community health with one another and with the information they need to improve the "wellness" of people in their communities. Developing world delegates from the South Pacific and China together with presentations of work done in Africa again focused attention to health informatics problems they face. It provided a forum where participants shared their knowledge and experience using information technology and began building partnerships to resolve problems and enhance health services in their communities. Approximately fifty papers from across Canada and the USA, Fiji, New Caledonia, China, Germany, England, The Netherlands and other countries were accepted. There were 212 registrants. Presenters included professionals in community health, educators, physicians, information

professionals, administrators and planners. A successful student poster session was introduced to form a part of future conferences.

ITCH '94: CHANGING OPPORTUNITIES, was held at the Victoria Conference Centre from October 30 to November 2, 1994. Health care systems the world over are facing ever increasing demands from the people they serve, increasing costs of human and material resources and decreasing amounts of funding. The challenge is to “do more with less”. The conference focused on how emerging technologies can provide opportunities to increase the efficiency of health care delivery in a demanding but financially challenged social environment. Seventy papers from across Canada and the USA, England, Australia, New Zealand, Holland, South Africa, Germany, Italy, and France were accepted.

ITCH '96: APPROPRIATE SYSTEMS / APPROPRIATE DECISIONS was held at the Victoria Conference Centre from November 3 - 6, 1996. The theme was based on the observation that as technology has evolved some of the focus on health information systems has shifted from what the systems do, to how well the systems do it. In other words, how appropriate are the systems to the decisions they are intended to support? Information system design is now driven less by availability of technology and more by the processes the product will serve.

Fifty-one papers from across Canada, Australia, Austria, England, France, Germany, New Caledonia, South Africa, Sweden, and the USA were presented at the conference. Keynote addresses by Roberto Rodriguez of the Pan American Health Organization; Jane Fulton, former Deputy Minister, Alberta Health; Dr. Anthony Wade, Former Editor, Canadian Medical Informatics Magazine; and, Mr. Ray Rogers, Executive Director, Information Management Group (IMG), United Kingdom National Health Service, were especially well received by the delegates at this year's conference.

Approximately 300 delegates attended ITCH. The continued growth of the ITCH conferences points to the need for such a forum even in these times of fiscal restraint. Feedback from the delegates indicates that ITCH is a recognized international conference and in many cases the preferred venue for delegates to present and discuss their work in the area of information technology in community health.

ITCH '98: NEW PARTNERSHIPS – BETTER CARE was the working theme for the 1998 International Conference held in Victoria, Canada, November 1 - 4, 1998, to discuss issues in information technology and community health. "New Partnerships" were seen as opportunities for "Better Care" emerging from the changing structure of the health care system. This conference focused on how information management and information systems were changing to accommodate the new structures and how IT could be used to exploit new opportunities to improve health care delivery in the community.

Fifty-four papers from across Canada, Australia, Brazil, England, New Caledonia, Republic of China, Scotland, Turkey and the USA were presented. The student poster contest had a record number of entries, including a participant from Brazil.

ITCH 2000: FROM POTENTIAL TO PRACTICE was the working theme for the International Conference held at the University of Victoria August 23 - 27, 2000. Two days of workshops followed the three-day international conference that attracted health care professionals, information and computer systems experts, academics and researchers, hospital administrators and public health providers. The keynote speakers were Dr. David Brandling-Bennett, Deputy Director - Pan American Health Organization, “The Role of Information Technology in the Health Care Systems of Developing Nations”; Mr. Denis Gauthier, Assistant Deputy Minister - Health Canada, “Canada's Emerging Population Health Information Initiatives”; and Dr. Peter Drury, Head, Information Policy Unit - National Health Service (UK), “How the New Health Information Strategy Will Affect Community Health”. They were joined by presenters from Australia, Brazil, China, England, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Romania, Singapore and the USA as well as Canada.

*Now expanded to: **Information Technology and Communications in Health (ITCH)***

ITCH 2007: TODAY'S INFORMATION FOR TOMORROW'S IMPROVEMENTS was the working theme for the 2007 international conference held February 15 - 18, 2007 in Victoria, Canada. Information

technology has affected nearly every aspect of health care today. The need for better information and systems to provide improved services and improve patient quality of life has been recognized as being a critical issue both nationally and internationally. This conference focused on understanding how health informatics can be applied towards quality improvement of health and healthcare organizational outcomes.

Leading practitioners and researchers from across Canada and internationally gathered to support today's information systems and ensure tomorrow's improvements. Delegates came from as far afield as Austria, Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, Taiwan, United Arab Emirates, and the USA to hear over 90 presentations and listen to keynote addresses by Edward Shortliffe, Richard Alvarez and Steven Huesing.

ITCH 2009: REVOLUTIONIZING HEALTH CARE WITH INFORMATICS: FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE will be held February 19 – 22, 2009 at Delta's Laurel Point Inn, Victoria, BC, Canada.

Information technology affects nearly every aspect of healthcare today. Health information systems are seen by many as the critical element in improving and modernizing healthcare in Canada and internationally. In order to achieve this potential there will need to be a stronger bridge between research and practice in order to solve complex healthcare problems using technology and to develop best practices based on proven results. To this end, ITCH 2009 will bring together leading researchers and practitioners from Canada and internationally to support advances in health informatics.

This conference will be of interest and importance to all health professionals, clinicians, information technology experts, and anyone with an interest in the health care system.