

Medical Informatics Efforts in Turkey

Osman Saka^{a,b}, Neşe Zayim^b, Kemal Hakan Gülkesen^{a,b}

^aBoard Member, Turkish Medical Informatics Association

^bAkdeniz University, Faculty of Medicine, Department of Biostatistics and Medical Informatics
Antalya/TURKEY

Abstract

Parallel to the developments in the world, health informatics field is experiencing a continuous growth in Turkey. Health informatics efforts in Turkey initiated in 1992 with the establishment of postgraduate Medical Informatics Education Program in Akdeniz University, Antalya. Today, six institutions provide postgraduate health informatics education in Turkey. In 1999, Turkish Medical Informatics Association (TURKMIA) was founded. Until today, TURKMIA organized several activities in order to fulfil its guiding role in health informatics in Turkey. In order to improve healthcare services in Turkey, "National Health Information System" project was initiated under the authority of Ministry of Health in 2003. In this study, a review of developments in the field of health informatics in Turkey will be presented.

Keywords:

Medical informatics, Informatics education, e-health, TURKMIA

Introduction

Although health informatics studies are relatively new in Turkey, most initiatives started in 90s, with the establishment of formal educational programs, foundation of Turkish Medical Informatics Association, and governmental efforts.

Medical Informatics Education

Graduate level informatics education of the healthcare professionals initiated in the beginning of the 1980s in a few Medical Schools. Today, almost all of the health education institutions have introduced informatics lectures on their graduate level curriculums. However, the content of these lectures is not covering health informatics concepts in some of the institutions.

The first formal postgraduate medical informatics education was initiated in 1992 with the establishment of Medical Informatics Master Program in Akdeniz University. In the past few years, developments in the field of health informatics and increasing awareness of the need for health informatics professionals have led to the development of postgraduate health

informatics education programs. Today, six institutions provide postgraduate health informatics education in Turkey.

Turkish Medical Informatics Association

TurkMIA was founded in 1999 as a non-profit organization, dedicated to guiding development and organization of health informatics in Turkey. It is a member of International Medical Informatics Association (IMIA) and European Federation for Medical Informatics (EFMI). It has 558 members. TurkMIA has organized several activities in order to fulfil its guiding role in health informatics in Turkey.

- Organized four symposiums, six national conferences, several meetings and courses. Hosted EFMI Special Topic Conference in 2009
- Prepared "National Health Information Strategies in the New Millennium" report in 2001.
- Provided financial support programmes for academic activities of its members.

Governmental Efforts

In order to improve health and promote better healthcare services in Turkey, "National Health Information System" project was initiated under the authority of Ministry of Health in 2003. Ten working groups were formed for National Health Information System Project. The group members were from the governmental institutions, nongovernmental organizations, and universities. As a result of this study, "Turkish Health Information System Action Plan" was published in 2004. Although some steps in the project including minimal data sets, data dictionaries, and message standards are completed, it is criticised mainly by the questions about its applicability and privacy of health information.

Conclusion

As most of the countries in transition, establishing formal programs to provide training and education in health informatics and realising National Health Information System is an enormous challenge for Turkey, mainly due to limited human resources.