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IT Governance

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IT is still often seen as an alien creature, a rather scary entity that you have to tolerate in your hospital as a 'sign of the times', but that you would not invite to a weekly staff meeting, let alone a board meeting.

The problem is that this attitude most probably has detrimental effects on hospital management. To be fully efficient and effective, IT has to be integrated into overall hospital governance. This issue of *IT@Networking Communications* is thus trying to demonstrate that IT could and should contribute to the strategic development of a healthcare establishment.

From this perspective, Claude Hagège explains to us how to define the functions and the objectives of a hospital IT department, how its configuration has to be designed in function of governance priorities. Dr Utler focuses on one of the essential aspects of today's governance, namely quality management, and demonstrates how IT applications can significantly enhance it. Corinne Gazeau's contribution focuses on the institutional and government support to hospitals' IT department.

On a lighter note, Dr Ironmonger reminds us that governance, much as IT, is nothing without the people implementing it.

Clinical engagement, or the necessity to get health professionals on board, is crucial to the success of any IT project and its smooth incorporation into any hospital's mission plan.

The major project we bring to light in this issue embodies one of the key benefits of IT: mobility. Being able to fully interact with a medical specialist on the move and from a distance, at a reasonable cost, is a dream come true for doctors using this system developed by a Greek laboratory.

Finally, our conference report section lets two speakers at the recent Tromso Telemedicine conference, Annelies Veys and An Jacobs, share their experiences with us and lessons learned from one of the sessions of the conference, raising questions on how politics, ethics and the law influence the development of telemedicine.

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