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The World of Health IT Conference & Exhibition 2007

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The recent World of Health IT Conference & Exhibition (WHT'07), held 22-25 October in Vienna, Austria offered, over the course of four days, an array of satellite symposia, perspectives from world leaders, peer-identified educational sessions as well as 59 vendor exhibitors.

This year's supporters were Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS), the European Commission (EC) and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The satellite pre-conference focused on three categories:

Leaders: A solution-driven approach in order to facilitate the transition from Strategy to IT Integration within the framework of organisational change and innovation adoption.

Physicians: With a focus on clinical empowerment through technology, the symposium perceived the physician as leader in IT integration.

Nurses: Revolutionise nursing through technology. It was an opportunity for nursing leaders, nursing practitioners and nursing informatics professionals to analyse the role and impact of information and information technology in daily healthcare environment.

Participants at WHT'07 could choose between more than 40 parallel educational sessions including:

- P EU eHealth Agenda and Activities on Patient Safety;
- P European Healthcare IT Management and Governance Practices;
- P Using an EPR and Medication Barcoding to Improve Patient Safety;
- P Ubiquitous Medical Imaging with a Database Management System;
- P Digital Plasters for Non-Intrusive Wireless Vital Signs Monitoring; and
- P The G-Standard Medical Database (eSession).

A.Barker (UK) analysed real-time computerisation of prescription, clinical pharmacy activities and medicine administration and their effects. In the same way, F.McGroarty highlighted how IT and medication barcoding can contribute to the delivery of high standards of patient safety. Instant access to comprehensive patient information, full interoperability of patient data and healthcare providers, as well as improved communication for continuity of care and significant reduction in duplicative examinations were some of the advantages being registered by the implementation of IZIP, a Czech project of web-based health record.

A first version of Viennese e-Health was presented by Dr. H.Schimidl and emphasised e-Health as a means to improve the delivery of services while the core strategies lie in projects centred in data sharing between different national institutions and stakeholders.

In addition, interested participants were invited to take the CPHIMS (Certified Professional in Healthcare Information and Management Systems) examination to demonstrate their expertise and commitment in the field.

WHIT'07 also saw the release of the 1st Annual Leadership Survey, meant to collect data about IT priorities, technology adoption and other crucial factors in the use of IT. Data collection for the survey took place from August 10, 2007 to October 1, 2007 in six languages: English, Finnish, French, German, Italian and Spanish. Throughout the Europe, the Middle East & Africa (EMEA) region, 192 senior healthcare professionals responded to the survey that introduced an annual set of key indicators for the region.

Based on the survey results, HIMSS EMEA in collaboration with HIMSS Analytics (subsidiary organisation specialised in delivering quality data and analytical expertise in the healthcare IT sector) identified key priorities in the EMEA region:

- P Implementing a regional/national electronic health record,
- P Connecting ICT with the hospital and remote environments such as the physician's office or private home,
- P Preparing for an increased need for healthcare services as the population ages,
- P Improving patient satisfaction, and
- P Increasing Patient safety/quality of care—are the top business issues of healthcare organisations in the years ahead.

Other interesting points which were underscored as a result of the survey:

- P Lack of an ICT plan – or the failure to execute an ICT plan already in place – rank as the top barriers to successful ICT implementation,
- P Clinical data repository topped the list for healthcare applications most important for the future,
- P Wireless information systems, intranets, and identity management were the top three technologies noted to be most important in the next two years, and
- P ICT budgets and staffing are expected to increase from 2007 to 2008.

“HIMSS Analytics will continue to work with HIMSS EMEA to track these IT issues identified through this annual survey,” said HIMSS Analytics CEO/President Dave Garets.

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