
Zoom On: Charles Safran, Medical Informatics Award Winner



Dr. Charles Safran

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Charles Safran, MD is this year's recipient of the American College of Medical Informatics (ACMI) Morris F. Collen Award for excellence in the field of medical informatics. The award recognises achievements in the use of information technology in healthcare. Specifically, it honours individuals who have advanced patient care and medical education through computing. Morris F. Collen was integral in the development of medical informatics as a clinical specialty.

Safran is the Chief of the Division of Clinical Informatics at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC) in Boston, which he has led since 2007. He is a primary care internist, known for his innovative solutions to healthcare challenges. For example, he developed a telemedicine program called Baby CareLink which improved communications between the families of premature babies and their care providers through online technology and videoconferencing. He also pioneered the integrated clinical computing and electronic health record systems at several institutions throughout Boston and Cambridge, Massachusetts: BIDMC, Brigham & Women's Hospital and two teaching hospitals at Harvard Medical School.

A current project of Safran's is the Information Sharing Across Generations and Environments (InfoSAGE). The program, supported by the federal government's Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, explores the ways in which technology can facilitate elder care by collaborating with families.

Safran is the third BIDMC physician to be honoured with the award. Previous recipients were Division founders Howard Bleich, MD and Warner Slack, MD. The BIDMC was one of the first academic organisations to focus how computers can assist in teaching and medical research, as well as the delivery of patient care.

"I am honored to be following in such footsteps and build upon the solid foundation created by Warner and Howard," said Safran. "The clinical informatics program has always been about the care and well-being of our patients and fellow citizens."

ACMI Chair Alexa McCray, PhD, of Harvard Medical School said, "We congratulate Dr. Safran on his accomplishments in improving patient care at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Harvard's teaching hospitals and thank him for the clinical informatics leadership role he has played both throughout his career and recently during the creation of the CI subspecialty of medicine."

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The American Board of Medical Specialties issued the first round of clinical informatics certifications earlier this year. Safran was instrumental in defining the core contents of the sub-specialty and was involved with delineating its training requirements. He was also one of the first physician recipients of the certification, which involves the use of information and communication systems to improve health outcomes for individuals and populations. The subspecialty emphasises strong clinician-patient relationships.

In the past, Safran has served as President and Chairman of the American Medical Informatics Association (AMIA). AMIA has approximately 5,000 professional members in 65 countries who are involved with advancing informatics and assessing its role on health innovations and health policies. The organisation recognises five informatics domains: clinical informatics, clinical research informatics, consumer health informatics, public health informatics and translational bioinformatics. Safran is also a past Vice President of the International Medical Informatics Association.

Safran is an Associate Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School, where he chairs the Clinical Informatics track for the schools master's program in biomedical informatics.

He earned a master's degree in mathematical logic and a Doctor of Medicine degree from Tufts University.

Reference: Newswise

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