The Journal of Community Informatics (http://ci-journal.net) is a focal point for the communication of research of interest to a global network of academics, Community Informatics practitioners and national and multi-lateral policy makers. We invite submission of original, unpublished articles for a forthcoming special edition of the Journal that will focus on Health and Community Informatics. We welcome research articles, case studies and notes from the field. All research articles will be double blind peer-reviewed. Insights and analytical perspectives from practitioners and policy makers in the form of notes from the field or case studies are also encouraged – these will not be peer-reviewed.

What is Community Informatics?

Community informatics links economic and social development efforts at the community level with emerging opportunities in such areas as electronic commerce, community and civic networks and teacentres, electronic democracy and online-participation, self-help and virtual health communities, advocacy, cultural enhancement, and others

...is concerned with carving out a sphere and developing strategies for precisely those who are being excluded from this ongoing rush, and enabling these individuals and communities to take advantage of some of the opportunities which the technology is providing. It is also concerned with enhancing civil society and strengthening local communities for self-management and for environmental and economically sustainable development, ensuring that many who might otherwise be excluded are able to take advantage of the enormous opportunities the new technologies are presenting

- Michael Gurstein in ‘Community Informatics: Enabling Communities with Information and Communications’

Why a special issue on Health?

In recent years in the area of public health there has been an increased focus on the broader social determinants of health, as well as on social inclusion in order to improve health and wellbeing across populations and to reduce health inequities. This leads us to ask what role ICTs can play in supporting health, and particularly for those who are less socially and economically advantaged. ICTs may support opportunities for health in the more narrow medical/clinical area of access to and engagement with health services and health care, or in the broader areas which support health such as might be linked with community development. This is the case in both developing and developed nations.

In the area of health, ICTs can be used in four main ways, depending on whether the interactions are between providers and/or community members. Since Community Informatics focuses on empowering communities, this special JoCI issue on Health will focus particularly on the ways in which ICTs can benefit communities through providing them with better access to services and supports, enabling their engagement in health care, improving their contact with service providers and health practitioners, increasing potential for improved continuity of care, improving opportunities for self-management of health conditions and health promotion, and consumer-to-consumer support.
The specific value of a community informatics frame is through encouraging a focus on aspects of ICT use at the level of the community and individual citizen, to explore what are supportive and inclusionary programs and processes which empower individual citizens and communities to have greater involvement in their own health care, and which provide them with the necessary skills and resources to be able to participate. This is in contrast to a focus on the benefits of further empowering providers (although this may indirectly in the longer term benefit citizens, such as through the use of electronic health records which can provide a more efficient administrative basis for health practice). This JoCI special issue particularly seeks to avoid a technical focus on provider-oriented e-health and m-health that may only indirectly benefit citizens and communities, and instead seeks to focus on aspects that provide more direct benefits to citizens and communities.

ICTs can potentially increase the ability of communities to have a greater role in decision-making about their health and to access more appropriate sources of information relevant to supporting their health. On the other hand, since the frequent, ongoing and “useful” use of ICTs requires certain skills and resources it is possible that those with poorer health, who could potentially most benefit from what ICTs can offer, will be those who least have the skills and resources to reap the benefits.

The special edition is intended as a forum to enable a new interface between practitioners and academics around an emerging vocabulary on health and ICTs which goes beyond the technical to consider the social application and benefits of ICTs, and to build the concepts of community informatics in relation to digital equity and digital inclusion.

**Thematic focus**

This issue will focus on health within community contexts – the intersection between new technologies and issues of access to services, access to health providers, and access to health information and support. It hopes to engage with aspects of the following questions, and contributions may analyse these questions through an exploration of any of the following (or additional) themes, which are just indicative:

- What are the implications of the increasing use of ICTs in health management and health service provision for equity of citizen access, especially for less advantaged communities?
- If patient engagement is important, how can ICTs support this?
- Will increasing patient involvement through ICTs affect professional expertise?
- What constitutes effective citizen engagement through ICTs in relation to health?
- What is the role of health IT/PHR in providing continuity of care?
- As ICTs transform health systems, what are the challenges and possibilities to ensure that those communities or community members who are already disadvantaged in terms of cultural, social, financial and geographical access are not further disadvantaged?
- How can the needs and views of individuals and communities be truly represented as health services become increasingly ICT-mediated?
- How can ICTs provide pathways and opportunities that have previously been denied or not accessible to the disadvantaged (e.g. increased use of mobile phones and SMS-texting for medication monitoring).
- How might interactive features of new technologies change local knowledge about health and involvement in health decisions?
- How are audio-visual ICTs effecting change that empowers communities or individuals?
- How are ICTs improving health for geographically isolated communities or individuals?

At this stage we invite interested authors to **submit a 250 word abstract with indicative paper title and content**. Once abstracts have been reviewed by the editors, successful authors will be invited to submit a full paper for peer-review. Ideas for short articles on specific experiences and/ or policy and regulatory issues can also be submitted, to be reviewed by the guest editors. This edition of the Journal will accept submissions in English.
IMPORTANT DATES
Deadline for abstracts: 14 March 2011
Notification of successful abstracts: 9 May 2011
Deadline for paper submissions: 31 August 2011
Estimated publication date: November 2011

For information about submission requirements, including author guidelines, please visit:
http://www.ci-journal.net/index.php/ciej/about/submissions#onlineSubmissions

For further information about the Special Issue, for clarifications, comments or suggestions, and to send abstracts of papers for consideration, please contact Lareen Newman at the following address (with “JoCI special issue” in the subject line for emails, and with abstracts providing your author name, position, affiliation and contact details):

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