

Editorial to the HELINA 2019 proceedings

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The HELINA 2019 Conference

The 12th HELINA (HEaLth INformatics in Africa) conference was organized from 20 – 22 November 2019 in Gaborone, Botswana. The conference was hosted by the University of Botswana (UB) e-Health Research Unit under the Department of Computer Science, in collaboration with: Ministry of Health and Wellness (MoHW), Ministry of Transport and Communication (MTC), Botswana Institute for Technology Research and Innovation (BITRI), and the Botswana Health Information Management Association (BoHIMA), with Support from Stop TB Partnership in Geneva and Virtual Business Network (VBN) Services.

The conference focused on evidence to practice of digital health interventions to achieve universal health coverage. Digital health is an enabler for equitable health care access, from clinical care to public health. The conference provided a platform to showcase digital health interventions that have not only shown benefits, but are also sustainable.

The Conference Themes

The call for submissions for HELINA 2019 covered a broad range of themes related to the implementation of digital health interventions in Africa under the title “From Evidence to Practice: The implementation of digital health interventions in Africa for achievement of Universal Health Coverage”. Academic research papers, work in progress papers, and case study/experience papers were solicited within the following themes:

- The maturity model approach to implementation of digital health solutions
- Digital Health Learning Systems
- Quality and use of health data and systems
- Big data analytics in health care
- Health Information Systems Interoperability
- Continuous Quality Improvement of health data and systems
- Development of competent human capacity for digital health
- Sustainable ICT-solutions for health service delivery
- Artificial Intelligence and frontier technologies in digital health

Review process

After a call for papers was sent out a total of 133 submissions were received. A double blind peer review process was used for evaluating each full research and work-in-progress paper. These submissions were anonymized before being submitted to at least 2 reviewers according to their area of expertise. The Scientific Programme Committee based their final decision on the acceptance of each submission on the recommendations and comments from reviewers. Accepted submissions were then sent back to the authors for revision according to the reviewers’ comments. This review process resulted in the following acceptance rates:

Full research papers: 4.5% (n=8)

Work in progress papers: 6% (n=5)

Case studies and experience papers: 8% (n=11)

Rejected or retracted papers: 82% (n=109)

In order to be included in the conference proceedings, an accepted paper had to be presented at the conference.

Nicky Mostert, HELINA 2019 SPC Chair