

THE PROMISE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES IN AN AGE
OF NEW HEALTH CHALLENGES

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The Promise of New Technologies in an Age of New Health Challenges

Selected Papers from Global Telehealth 2016

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Preface

The 5th Global Telehealth Conference was held in Auckland on 1st and 2nd November 2016, hosted by the Health Informatics New Zealand (HiNZ) organisation. The choice of venue allowed a return to the Asia-Pacific arena for the conference, following its previous two years in South Africa (2014) and Canada (2015). It is hoped that the event will continue to find new locations year by year, in order to bring the benefits of globally-relevant research in Telehealth and associated areas to new audiences.

This volume provides a record of contributed papers presented at the above conference. The 18 papers included here were accepted on the basis of a blinded peer-review process which provided independent expert appraisal by members of the Scientific Programme and Review Committee. The acceptance rate for the conference was approximately 60% of papers submitted, ensuring publication of the highest quality of work. These papers cover a wide variety of topics, from theoretical and abstract contributions through to discussion of practical projects and highly specific applied contributions. In addition, two invited papers are included, which were also accepted through the reviewing pathway. These detail some recent contributions towards two global issues in which Telehealth plays a major role: universal health coverage and personal health monitoring.

The theme chosen for Global Telehealth 2016 was “The Promise of New Technologies in an Age of New Health Challenges.” This reflects a change in emphasis which can be noted in many health services, where conventional pressures such as budget and workforce constraints are being augmented by indirect forces of social change and strategic direction, which portend longer term and more flexible approaches. Telehealth, as well as many other technology-based health care assistive elements, offers demonstrably effective and sustainable solutions to issues such as access to care and quality of care, by enabling different models of care and care delivery channels to be employed.

New Zealand was a fitting choice of venue for the conference, as it has held a longstanding commitment to Telehealth as a mechanism for health care delivery nationally and in the wider Pacific region. This position was reaffirmed earlier this year with the release by the New Zealand Ministry of Health of the document entitled “New Zealand Health Strategy: Future Direction”. This refreshed national health strategy acknowledges the need to work differently to meet changing health needs, with Health IT including Telehealth identified as a key enabler of such change. The strategy endorses the direction set by New Zealand programmes in electronic referral, shared care planning and tele-consultation as enablers of efficient and well-coordinated health delivery. Furthermore, the strategy emphasizes the ability of Telehealth – especially as exemplified by patient portals, and mental health and well-being tools – to strengthen health consumers’ direct role in the healthcare system.

Anthony J. Maeder
Kendall Ho
Alvin Marcelo
Jim Warren

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