

## Welcoming Address to MEDINFO

HEINZ ZEMANEK, IFIP President

Mr. Chairman, Honoured Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The combination of Medicine, one of the oldest professions in history, and information processing, one of the youngest fields in science and technology, is one of the noblest tasks in IFIP. I am, therefore, proud that the First World Conference on Medical Informatics takes place during my term as IFIP President. We considered this event so important that we did something we had rejected in the past: we embodied this conference in the IFIP Congress 74 because—as I said this morning in my welcome address to the Congress—we wanted to demonstrate our successful cooperation with one of the most important professions of human life and our estimation of the computer user. We all realise that there is still a big piece of common work to be done,

Since IFIP has the honour and the pleasure of welcoming at this World Conference so many medical doctors and hospital specialists, it seems useful to say a few words on IFIP, the International Federation for Information Processing. In your folder you will find a little IFIP present, a small brochure called IFIP Summary, giving you the formal information and a lot of data. I invite you to look through it.

The main activity of IFIP is the IFIP Congress every three years. There is no need to describe it—you are in the middle of one and you get your direct impression of what it is and how it runs. The IFIP Congress proceedings store every three years a picture of the science and art of information processing in overview and detail.

A second important part of IFIP's work goes on in the Technical Committee (TC's) and Working Groups (WG's). The TC's are composed of representatives of our national member societies (if they want to send somebody and if they can find somebody to do this hard work—one representative for each country), while the membership to the working group (decided by the TC) is individual and independent of country and membership—a group of competent specialists. The WG's meet for the discussion of their subject, they produce working papers and many have done very important development work. The TC's coordinate this work and, in particular, they organise Working Conferences on subjects which require advance. There have already been more than a dozen Working Conferences and their proceedings document IFIP contribution to the progress of information processing.

TC 4, the Technical Committee in Medical Information Processing, followed precisely the model of an IFIP TC. The idea originated in France, and I am happy that Professor Francois Grémy, the initiator and chairman from 1966 to 1973 is your conference chairman. In Mr. Roukens, TC 4 chairman since 1974 he found an active and competent successor.

I have personally always taken much interest in TC4 and I was at many of their meetings. I have great respect for their achievements. I have seen with satisfaction and pleasure how fast the difficulty was overcome to bring medical doctors, hospital administrators and computer specialists to a common language and to a mutual understanding in the field of information processing.

This was, however, no surprise for me. I have been a "cybernetician" in some period of my life, cooperating a lot with medical doctors and biologists. My experience brings me to the conclusion that if medical doctors and biologists would get another 24 hour per day, they would be able to develop any science or technology they need without any physicist or engineer (which is proven, e. g., by the medico-biological development of the feedback principle—the re-afference principle— independent of electrical engineering).

Medical doctors would use computers without any support from information processing specialists if our tool, the computer, was more perfect. IFIP is extremely satisfied that TC 4 offers the necessary support, and IFIP will continue to help as long as this is required, until our tool will be perfect enough that Medical Information Processing will be a pure medical problem so that TC 4 can return to an international medical federation—where it belongs. This comment was made to my friends in TC 4 before. It does include the condition of a perfect enough computer, so that it refers far into future—which should never be overlooked—and it mainly expresses that IFIP does not want to dominate but to help).

The idea of MEDINFO is a creation of TC 4 and IFIP is very thankful to its initiators and its organisers, in first line to Professor Grémy, the Conference Chairman, to Mr. Wendel, the chairman of the organising subcommittee within the Organising Committee of Congress 74, and to the two editors, Professor Anderson and Dr. Forsythe—experienced by also having edited the first TC 4 Working Conference Proceedings. The present volume impresses by its size and quality. This might reflect in the price for it, but IFIP is proud of having helped to make this book representative in the medical environment.

Let me now give a short excerpt of a part of my welcoming address to the Congress this morning. I said that the participant, although he has paid his participation fee, still has several duties, and I mention four of them:

to select what he wants and is able to attend (easier at MEDINFO than at the Congress because of few parallel sessions),

to integrate what you hear to your personal picture of Medical Informatics in 1974,

to meet people and,

to enjoy actively the conference;

and I also want to repeat what I said on the English language as our communication tool, going across medicine, administration and information processing. Very cordially, but energetically, I ask all speakers who enjoy the privilege to get through at our congress with their mother language to control their speed and their pronunciation, and to restrict themselves to the subject of their wonderful language which they can expect to be grasped by us "developing English consumers".

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen—IFIP is satisfied that its name has been a motivation for so many volunteers to share the design of this conference and I want to thank all of them. A particular word of thanks, however, is due to the World Health Organisation, who have given to TC 4 and to this conference not only the valuable formal background—in addition they have given substantial active practical support which is of infinite help to our work.

The Conference on Medical Informatics is at your disposition. Ladies and Gentlemen—reward the preparation work by gaining information, insight, friends and enjoyment.