

Opening Address

F. GREMY, Chairman of the conference, Chairman of the Programme Committee

MEDINFO 74 is the first World Conference on Medical Informatics sponsored by International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP).

The IFIP body responsible for the organization of this World Conference is the 4th Technical Committee (T.C.4) of the Federation devoted to Information Processing in Medicine, and chaired by J. Roukens from the Netherlands.

On setting up this Conference, the Programme Committee adopted the following scientific policy: we thought that the impact of this Conference should be not only scientific, but also, and mainly educational. Indeed, it is intended not only for specialists but also for lay people, medical doctors, nurses and health administrators who would like to have a broad view on the problems, hopes, and difficulties raised by the development of health computing.

This is the reason why we designed, as precisely as possible, the framework of the Conference. We have chosen 19 themes from those we thought the most important both for the present and for the future of the development of computing in the health field. Our intention was to try and cover most aspects of medical computing including human, psychological and political as well as scientific and technical. These themes were divided into 3 parallel series of sessions, each of these devoted to one theme. For each session a chairman was carefully selected among the most prominent members of the international scientific community, and given the responsibility of the organization of his session (specifically the selection of the papers, the order of presentation, the introduction, and the conclusion of the session).

This policy of designing the whole Conference very strictly has had the following consequences:

- (1) the burden of the Conference lies on the shoulders of the session chairman. Some of them have had a very difficult task to accomplish, and all have to be thanked very warmly. They are the true makers of the Conference, and its success will be theirs.
- (2) the numbers of submitted papers to the different sessions were very unequal. So the rate of selection was very different from one session to another. The chairman of sessions 2.1, 2.2, 2.5 and 3.1 had to particularly severe in their choice. Indeed it can be reasonably claimed that our policy is unfair to papers which have been discarded, though they were of very good scientific quality, just because they were submitted for an over-subscribed session. When adopting our policy we knew this risk, and accepted it.

We thought also that it was necessary to enclose the whole Conference within two plenary sessions. The inaugural plenary session is devoted to general information on the present trends of computer sciences. Such information will be, we hope, very useful to all doctors and health specialists who, even if interested in health computing, are not always in a position to follow up very narrowly the evolution of information processing sciences and techniques.

The final plenary session will tackle an essential problem: "Is the use of computers in medical practice an illusion or a reasonable hope?" Professor H. Warner, and Professor C. Vallbona are among the best suited to give an answer to this thrilling question.

It is also my duty, and a very pleasant one indeed, to tell you how many people have contributed to the success of this conference, and to thank them in the name of the programme conference and of all the participants to the conference.

I must first thank IFIP and particularly past president Academician Dorodnicyn from USSR and Heinz Zemanek from Austria, who is the current President of IFIP.

Let me thank the World Health Organization and the International Hospital Federation for their assistance and interest, the Swedish government and parliament, the authorities of the county of Stockholm, and the town of Stockholm for their help and hospitality.

A special mention must be made of the contribution of the Swedish Planning and Rationalization (SPRI) Institute of the health and social services.

Several private companies have sponsored and financially supported the conference: the list can be found on page V. They deserve all our gratitude.

I have already said how important was the contribution of the session chairmen for the scientific quality of the conference.

The present proceedings have not been achieved without a great cooperative effort. If one remembers that more than 95 % of these proceedings have been issued as preprints for the participants of the conference, one can understand how hard, fast and well the editors, Professor John Anderson and Dr. Malcolm Forsythe have worked to review the papers. For this task, the help of their secretaries Miss Gordon, Mrs. Mary Graffin and Mrs. Bird was invaluable. Mr. Rasmussen was in charge of the contact with the printing company (Almqvist and Wiksell) and the publishers (North-Holland): this collaboration was perfect.

One must specially quote the work done by Dr. S. Bengtsson: with his colleagues of the Department of Microbiology of Uppsala, he accepted to redraw nearly 100 pictures, correcting a mistake of the call for papers which omitted to require explicitly from the authors the originals of their pictures. This wonderful effort deserves our admiration.

It would not be complete if I forgot the work done by the Organising Committee, and especially by S. Wendel, W. Schneider, H. Peterson, and Svetlana Broman.

I am also specially grateful to Miss Mary Ann Grant, who was to myself and to the Programme Committee an excellent secretary, discrete, efficient and charming.

This litany may appear boring—and I apologise for that—but all this enterprise has been a manifestation of efficient international fraternity. It was my duty to bring the attention of the readers of these proceedings to that.