## Editorial

# 'There's information in them there systems!'

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Over the last three months, we have received several new signals that operational clinical systems in primary care have been recognised as vital tools for both direct patient care and commissioning and planning the health service.

The Wanless report is a far-reaching document that bases its recommendations on an evidence-based assessment of the needs of the NHS for the next 20 years.[1] The outputs from the Primary Care Information Modernisation Board (www.pcimb.nhs.uk) underline the need for the provision of appropriate computing tools, as well as an appropriately trained and 'information proficient' workforce. Lastly, the quality agenda embedded in the new GP contract (www.bma.org.uk) has no prospect of being delivered without the help of operational systems being used by all clinicians *at the point of patient care*. Increasingly, the national service frameworks are also relying heavily on deriving information from systems, both to identify and to quantify the quality of care being delivered to patients.

This issue of *Informatics in Primary Care* has several articles that underline the importance of operational systems from various viewpoints: the importance of connectivity and intersystem communication, healthcare uses for emerging technologies, and the innovative use of maturing technologies in the healthcare arena. There is also an article that recognises the place of information proficiency within the workforce, and an article on information for consumers – another growth area in the rapidly changing health service.

## International partnerships

The Clinical Computing Special Interest Group (CLICSIG) report in this issue of the journal shows how healthcare informatics is beginning to spread its wings and to share expertise in order to solve similar problems in different countries. The January meeting of the group in Amsterdam built upon a growing partnership and dealt with the area of record structures in the field of primary care computing. The debate was critical to the understanding of the process and the current state of the art. CLICSIG continues to be open to all interested members of the PHCSG.

## It's our birthday

And finally, it's our 21st birthday this year – the PHCSG has come of age. Whether we are given the key to the door is another question though. Our first meeting was at the Postgraduate Centre, Addenbrooke's Hospital, in Cambridge from 19–21 June 1981. To celebrate this event, we are going to extend the Cambridge conference on to the Sunday for those who would like to attend. We are planning some special events and guest speakers, and we may even bake a cake! The next edition of *Informatics in Primary Care* will also include some views through the retrospectoscope, which has been equipped with 20/20 hindsight especially for the occasion.

If anyone has a favourite speaker from the past, or even contact details of some of our early members, I would be glad to hear from you.

REFERENCE

1 Wanless D (2002) *Securing Our Future Health: taking a long-term view*. HM Treasury: London. www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/consultations_and_legislation/wanless/consult_wanless_final.cfm?