

March 2012 Volume 9, Number 2

From The Chair, Tiffany Kelley



I hope that 2012 is off to a great start for you all! This issue marks the first Student Working Group Newsletter for 2012.

Speaking on behalf of the Student Working Group, we hope you all enjoyed the Annual Symposium in October. At the Annual Symposium we announced the newly elected members of the Student Working Group's Executive Committee that will serve for the 2012 year.

We meet monthly as a group to discuss ongoing and upcoming activities that involve members of the ST-WG. We encourage you as members of the working group to attend these calls to hear about what we are working on to support the group at large. Our calls occur on the second Thursday of each month at 8 PM EST. Most recently we have added a LinkedIn group to add to our communications with the student members of AMIA. The group is entitled "AMIA Student Working Group". Please take a moment to join and stay connected with fellow members.

As a reminder to you all, AMIA's call for submissions to the Annual Symposium will be open until March 15th. Each year a number of student members present their work at the symposium and we encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity. Details regarding the call for submissions can be found here: <http://www.amia.org/amia2012>.

I hope you all enjoy reading this issue of the newsletter that contains contributions from your fellow Student Working Group members. We hope that you will consider submitting some of your own work to the next newsletter. As always feel free to share any ideas

you have for the ST-WG. You may contact me directly (tiffany.kelley@duke.edu) and I will be sure to pass on the information to the Executive Group for discussion.

I am looking forward to an exciting and productive year of working with you all.

From The Editor, Edmond Ramly



Deputy editor Marc Roche and I are very excited to bring you the first 2012 issue of our newsletter. We hope the newsletter continues to enhance the network among

AMIA student members. The newsletter is for us by us. It is completely member driven, and is meant first and foremost to help members stay connected and informed. I encourage you all to use it as a platform to promote your current projects, ideas, and interest areas. The AMIA Student Working group leadership envisions the newsletter as a great networking and collaboration platform for the members. Please take advantage of this opportunity. Given how diverse and dynamic the AMIA student body is, I imagine you are all in unique situations. Please let us know at ramly@wisc.edu how we can best serve your needs.

Announcement: We're linked in!

The AMIA Student Working Group now has a LinkedIn Group! Join us at "AMIA Student Working Group" on www.linkedin.com and participate in conversations or start new ones!



AMIA Student Working Group News is published 3-4 times a year by the Student Working Group of the American Medical Informatics Association. Visit our web site for more information or to get involved.

www.amia.org/programs/working-groups/student
 Chair..... Tiffany Kelley
 Chair-Elect..... Nawanan Theera-Ampompunt
 Past-Chair Paulina Sockolow

ST-Rep to AMIA Board of Directors: Paulina Sockolow
 Executive Secretary Jacqueline Feinberg
 Editor-in-chief Edmond Ramly
 Members at Large

- Resident - Fellow Shashank Kaushik
- Masters Marcela Musgrove
- Doctoral - PhD..... Ryan Shaw
- Doctoral - Professional Mark Roche

Member Contributions

The Case for a National Informatics Service Corps

By Mitch Goldman (mgoldman@email.unc.edu)
MSN/MSIS Candidate (2012), UNC Chapel Hill



The National Health Service Corps (NHSC) provides financial incentives such as loan repayment and scholarships to clinicians who serve in communities with limited access to care. These Health Professional Shortage Areas lack sufficient numbers of primary care providers, and may also face geographic, demographic or economic challenges. The NHSC was created and funded under the federal Public Service Act and is an attempt to bridge these care gaps. The list of eligible clinical disciplines includes physicians, nurse practitioners, and psychologists, as well as dental hygienists and marriage therapists.

If we accept the premise that information tools have the potential to improve health outcomes, then we should be equally open to an undesirable corollary: Unequal distribution of health technology and informatics workers may lead to disparities in care and health. An "Informatics Service Corps", like the NHSC, would incentivize engagement with high-need communities and is the logical evolution of our federal health IT policy.

Technologies such as electronic health records (EHRs) and health information exchange may improve care coordination, decrease errors and duplicated services, promote adherence to evidence-based care processes, and facilitate public health analytics and bio-surveillance. The Meaningful Use provisions in 2009's HITECH Act provide incentives for EHR implementation. Eventually, non-adopters will be penalized with decreased Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements.

However, both practice-level and network-level technologies have significant barriers to implementation such as high startup costs, competing stakeholder interests, misaligned market incentives, and the need to update entrenched workflows. Thus, improving IT tools and realizing their potential will require a trained workforce for design, implementation and maintenance. The federal government has recognized these needs by providing grants to the ONC to improve health IT curricula and recruit students into community college and certificate programs.

The ONC's Federal Health Information Technology Strategic Plan lays out the government's

health IT mission and vision, and it explicitly acknowledges the need not only for a qualified workforce, but also one that is deployed where it is most needed:

"There are a few well-defined barriers that have slowed acceptance of EHRs and widespread information exchange. Small- and medium-sized providers often do not have sufficient capital to implement EHR systems. *There is a lack of skilled health IT professionals to support providers as they transition from paper records to EHRs ... Programs are focused on the providers that need the most help – solo and small group practices, community health centers, critical access hospitals, and providers located in rural and underserved areas* [emphasis added]."

Existing initiatives such as the ONC's Health IT Workforce Development Program and AMIA's 10x10 Program provide valuable learning resources and draw attention to the need for trained informaticians. However, addressing a shortage is more nuanced than training more workers and expecting them to fill in the gaps. Issues of geography and economics understandably attract professionals to certain areas or practice settings, and it is unreasonable to expect that workers will simply go where they are needed. Fields such as nursing and teaching have successfully shown that training alone is not sufficient to incentivize service and equitable workforce distribution, and those professions have established creative strategies for recruitment and retention.

However, there are challenges to developing an Informatics Service Corps. Even though the program may be presented as a politically desirable job creation effort, it would be, at least in the short term, an additional expenditure. Additionally, the health IT policy agenda is crowded with other issues, such as Meaningful Use, which understandably occupy our thought and advocacy leaders. More significantly, an Informatics Service Corps will require a coordinated effort to provide a detailed analysis of our workforce shortages in order to specifically identify informatics needs and ensure that an incentive program is the proper solution. We will have to define specific job categories and specific worker attributes, an effort that has proven to be fraught with methodological challenges.

Given the potential benefits to high-need practice environments, the patients they serve, and IT workers who may gain valuable skills and experiences, an

Informatics Service Corps would be a valuable addition to federal health policy.

Personal Experience as Student Working Group's Public Policy Liaison

By Nawanan Theera-Ampornpunt



Health IT is a prime focus at the national stage, and there are numerous public policy issues for which inputs from AMIA would be especially important. The sheer volume of incoming requests for comments and opportunities to voice opinions in the past few years created a challenge for AMIA and its Public Policy Committee to effectively gather inputs from its membership. In November 2010, AMIA created a new mechanism intended to help AMIA connect with each working group's membership to solicit inputs on various public policy issues.

The new mechanism called for a volunteer for each working group to serve as the working group's public policy liaison to AMIA's Public Policy Committee. When a new public policy issue arises, AMIA circulates the information to the public policy liaisons and solicits inputs from their respective working groups if the issue is pertinent to the working group. The inputs are compiled by the liaisons and provided to AMIA, which will consolidate inputs from various working groups and formulate a response. The process also typically involves AMIA's Public Policy Committee, which decides what the final response should be.

I have had a chance to serve as the Student Working Group's first public policy liaison since November 2010. There were dozens of incoming public policy issues since then, many of which were distributed to the working group members. A unique challenge of the Student Working Group membership is its diverse academic interests, unlike other working groups that are formed for a specific area within informatics. This means that in most cases, the policy issue in question would be interested by just a small group of our working group members. Most of the time, I received no feedback on the policy issues and did not provide a response to AMIA. In some cases, however, some of our members were kind to share their thoughts that I could use to formulate a response on behalf of the working group, and in other cases the policy issues being circulated were of interest to several of our members working in those areas.

Overall, my role as our working group's public policy liaison provides a great opportunity for me, an international student, to keep myself abreast of interesting public policy issues in informatics in the United States. It also provides me a chance to get to know the public policy liaisons of other working groups. One specific task I'm particularly proud of in this role is the chance to work with other liaisons and distinguished members of the Public Policy Committee to draft AMIA Position Papers that AMIA plans to use as its brief position statements when incoming policy-related inquiries arise (my team worked on a position paper on "Informatics As A Profession"). Being a student brought a unique perspective on this topic to the team that contributed to the final draft of the position paper.

While our working group does not contribute much to most of AMIA's public policy responses given our inherent diverse nature, having a policy liaison helps link AMIA and our working group's membership together and provides a channel for us as students and soon-to-be informatics professionals to help shape the public policy of the country. I am reaching a transitional stage in my career that would limit my future contribution as the Student Working Group's public policy liaison, and I urge you to consider this great opportunity to serve as the next liaison. Please do not hesitate to contact me at ranta@mahidol.ac.th for questions or further details.

I thank those who provided inputs to me and helped me do the job. I also thank our past Chairs Muzna Mirza and Paulina Sockolow who allowed me to serve in this role.

Working Group Chair and Chair-Elect

Chair: Tiffany Kelley is the Chair of the Student Working Group for the 2012 year. She is a 4th year Ph.D. Candidate at Duke University in the School of Nursing. Tiffany studies how nurses and providers use information to provide care to their patients. Her dissertation study is currently funded through a R36 Dissertation Grant from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). Tiffany has been involved with AMIA and the Student Working Group since 2009.

Chair-Elect: Nawanan Theera-Ampornpunt was trained in Thailand as a physician before he pursued his masters and Ph.D. in health informatics. He graduated in December from the University of

Minnesota and is now working as an informatician at a medical school in Thailand. He is the Chair-Elect of the Student Working Group for 2012 (will become Chair in 2013), and was a volunteer in the WG's communication committee for a few years. He also serves as AMIA's public policy liaison to the ST-WG. His academic interests include health IT adoption, people and organizational issues (POI) in informatics, and informatics education and workforce development.

AMIA Symposium 2011 Group Picture



A ST-WG lunch get-together at AMIA 2011 in Washington, DC on October 24, 2011

Conferences and Calls for Proposals

AMIA 2012 Annual Symposium Submissions

<http://www.amia.org/amia2012/proposals>

Submissions due March 15, 2012

2012 Joint Summits on Translational Science

<http://www.amia.org/jointsummits2012>

Mar 19, 2012 - Mar 23, 2012

Parc 55 Hotel

San Francisco, California

Nursing Informatics 2012

<http://www.ni2012.org/>

June 23-27, 2012

Hilton Montreal Bonaventure

Montreal, Canada

AMIA 2012 Annual Symposium

<http://www.amia.org/amia2012>

November 3-7, 2012

Hilton Chicago

Chicago, Illinois

Submissions due March 15th, 2012