Report from IMIA Working Group 4
prepared for IMIA AGM Singapore 1989

1 Workshop in Oslo 17 August 1988

This workshop was run in conjunction with the Council of Europe in association with the Medical Informatics Europe Congress, MIE-88, organised by EFMI. The papers from the workshop have been published in Medical Informatics, Volume 14, 207-247, 1989.

2 Hospital Oriented Protection Environment [HOPE]

As noted in the last report, a number of members of IMIA WG4 combined launch an EFMI working group [EFMI WG2] and to submit a proposal to the Advanced Informatics in Medicine, AIM, Programme of the European Commission with Prof Ab Bakker of BAZIS as the prime contractor. The intention was to review the field across the European Community and beyond and to identify any changes since the last monograph of the working group was published in 1983. In the event, the AIM programme received over 200 proposals for work under this programme and only 43 multi-national and multi-disciplinary consortia were funded. HOPE did not last long!

3 EC Working Conference on "Handling Health Information in the Future - The Challenge of the New Technologies" 19-21 March 1990

Following the absence of the important topic of Data Protection in Health Information Systems, the AIM secretariat had their attention drawn to this gap and we were able to persuade to them to sponsor a working conference on Data Protection and Legal Issues on an EC basis with support from some outside specialists. The meeting is, of course, supported by EFMI WG2 and it is expected that it will result in a useful publication. The Programme committee is chaired by Niels Rossing [AIM] and Barry Barber [IMIA WG4 /EFMI WG2]. Contact has been established with IFIP TC11 and a representative has been invited onto the programme committee as well as representatives from the Data Protection Registrars /Commissioners.

4 AIM Requirements Board

As a result of participation in the EC AIM Requirements Board, we have identified Six Safety First Principles for Health Information Systems in Europe as a basis for further work and exploration. These principles are as follows:-

1 Safe Environment for Patients and Users to ensure that no one is damaged by the operation or non-operation of the systems.

2 Secure Environment for Patients, Users and Others to ensure that information is not lost, corrupted or made available to unauthorised persons.

3 Convenient Environment for Users to ease the use of the systems and to reduce training needs.

4 Legally Satisfactory Environment across Europe for System Users and Suppliers concerning the legal responsibilities for the development, marketing, maintainance and use and mis-use of systems.

5 Legal Protection of Software Products to encourage the development and marketing of systems.

6 Multi-lingual Systems to avoid errors from inadequate understanding of the local language and to facilitate the spread of systems throughout the EC.

Computer systems are becoming more and more important in the delivery of Health Care Services and soon they will be vital to the safe practice of medicine. There will need to be an effective framework of regulation to ensure that these systems are developed and used safely. It is in the public interest that appropriate standards should be devised and implemented as soon as possible, and certainly before "safety critical systems" are employed to any significant extent.

5 MEDINFO 89 Singapore Workshop

The working group has taken responsibility for a workshop during MEDINFO at Singapore on 11 December 1989 and this opportunity will be taken for sounding out views on a world wide basis for future activities. At the moment it is not clear whether there is the momentum available for a full IMIA working conference in 2-3 years time or whether it would be better to encourage regional activities before bringing them into a world forum.

6 Terms of Reference

The Council of Europe Convention on "The Protection of Individuals in Regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data" has set the scene for Data Protection legislation but there is still a great deal to do in respect of the implementation of these requirements. Furthermore, the advent of decision support systems and safety critical systems will place much greater demands on our technology and our software engineering than were have previously faced. Computer Security, in its widest sense, must be a key issue as we take our systems into the next century. We believe that IMIA WG4 should embrace all aspects of Data Protection, Information Audit, Computer Security, Risk Analysis, Counter Measures, Contingency Planning as well as all the associated legal issues regarding the use or non-use of systems, product liability, "duty of care" legislation. These tasks will take us well beyond the conventional computing activities. The key problem is that of selecting the most useful tasks and the most effective methods of addressing them both within IMIA, EFMI and with other interested parties.

Barry Barber
21 November 1989