Technology Mediated Collaborations in Healthcare

Collaboration technologies are being used in healthcare research, practice, and management. However, they have potential for even greater use especially in the light of healthcare reforms which emphasize the key enabling role for technology to facilitate superior health care delivery currently occurring throughout many countries.

Geographically dispersed health professionals can use collaboration technology to communicate with each other, review patient records, manage workflows, and improve the delivery of patient care. Similarly, geographically non-collocated researchers can collaborate with each other. The challenges being addressed by this mini-track are encapsulated in the ontology in the figure below.

The four papers in the mini-track address different components of the ontology. The paper “Exploring Cloudy Collaboration in Healthcare: An Evaluation Framework of Cloud Computing Services for Hospitals” proposes an evaluation framework of cloud computing services for hospitals. The framework can be used to assess the services and expedite the adoption processes. It also deconstructs the complexity of cloud computing in healthcare. The paper “Towards IT Supported Coordination of Elder Care: A Field Study of Distributed Collaboration at a Care Center” reports and critically discusses the requirements of such support. It argues for keeping the heterogeneous actors in the system apart, but coordinating through segregation. The paper “An Ontological Health Cluster Framework” presents an ontology grounded in the extant interdisciplinary literature and drawing upon the international experience and knowledge of the authors. The paper “The Application of Activity Theory to Explain Collaborative Technology Use in Healthcare: The Case of a Chemotherapy Ordering System” analyzes the critical success factors for the implementation and assimilation of such a system.

Ideally, one would hope to realize all the possible collaborations envisaged in the ontology. There is a need for these collaborations. The four papers are a sample, albeit not representative, of the research on technology mediated collaboration in healthcare. The papers in the past years have covered many other aspects of the ontology. The four papers are signifiers of the state-of-the-practice. With the increasing emphasis on translational research, cost containment, safety, and quality in healthcare the collaborations underrepresented in these papers would be equally important for effective delivery.