AHIS Implementation

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The seventies were years of significant growth in the Automated Hospital Information System area. Beginning with a few courageous and forward-looking companies working closely with a handful of hospitals the practical utility of computerized systems for hospital management and clinical care was demonstrated. This early growth also was stimulated by the effective participation of the Federal Government (primarily the National Center for Health Services Research) in demonstrating and evaluating this emerging technology. Quoting the July 17, 1975 Congressional Record concerning the demonstration and evaluation effort at one hospital, this activity "illustrates the useful role of Federal Government (in cooperation with hospitals and private industry) in supporting an objective and independent demonstration and evaluation for use by other hospitals considering such technology." The result of these efforts is a multi-billion dollar industry that promises continued growth during the decade of the eighties.

The six preceding SCAMC meetings have included numerous papers involving Automated Hospital Information System implementations. These presentations were useful for informing the hospital community about the various systems in use and the complexity and comprehensiveness of various applications. In the AHIS Implementation session for the seventh SCAMC meeting, we have tried to move away from the general "show and tell" approach of typical AHIS implementations. Rather, for this session we have assembled papers involving "next step" approaches in the evaluation of this technology.

The first paper deals with the challenge of promoting standard (compatible) hospital computer systems to serve the needs of the Veterans Administration, a large and diverse health care delivery organization. The second paper discusses the evolution of a system originating with 200+ terminal AHIS, to a communications network of several computers, and finally to the integration of a host terminal network and a flexible Local Area Network (LAN). The third paper describes how a large university based hospital has developed and implemented an outpatient scheduling and registration system to interface with their integrated inpatient AHIS. The final paper describes how an AHIS with a medical knowledge base (the HELP system), developed at a university teaching hospital, was successfully transferred and implemented into a community hospital.