

E.3. Implications for Information Technology

Information technology must be adapted to the volume and complexity of the information that is required and used at different levels of healthcare organizations. While at large specialty hospitals there is a need for multiple functional operational units, implying therefore the need for a complete set of information system (e.g., pharmacy, laboratory, personnel management, accountability), in small general hospitals there is a more basic requirement for information technology. In PHC centers the information technology may be as simple as the level of complexity in healthcare.

All this has implications in the selection and deployment of appropriate technology, through the combination of technology of different complexities, depending on the level of action and decision in which data will be processed and information will be provided. Supporting appropriate technology, the application of suitable and user-friendly software to be used primarily by healthcare personnel — not trained in information technology — at the PHC level for service operation, individual patient care, and epidemiological analysis is to be the major goal of systems developers.

In order to preserve the functional integration of healthcare networks, the use of information network should involve different institutions, in both the public and private sectors. Common standards and criteria are needed for those concepts, measures, and reports to be shared and integrated. Major organizational challenges regarding the deployment of health and healthcare informatics applications faced by managers, political decision-makers, and developers in the Region, especially in the public sector, are mostly related to:

- Inadequate health information infrastructure
- Organizational deficiencies
- Great diversity of user needs
- Access to and appropriate deployment and utilization of technology.