

F.2. Guidelines for Latin American and Caribbean Countries

In light of the inexorable move towards standards development and convergence, Latin American and Caribbean countries should take steps, individually and collectively, to foster the development and acceptance of internationally agreed IS&T standards, in order to facilitate the advantages of standards-based systems.

It is evident that the harmonious operation of disparate modules provided by different manufacturers is possible only if specific standards are adhered to, in the technical context of information systems and communications as well as in that of medicine. The definition of the clinical record, including aspects of its structure, semantics, codification, etc., are also important questions that cry out for standardization, without which the desired degree of interoperability would be impossible.

Finally, the issue is germane to specific security issues that address medical ethics, not to mention legislative implications, especially in the case of Latin America. In the Region the policies and elements related to health information infrastructure show an evident delay in comparison with developed countries, which results in a formal limitation not only to provide more economic and steadier solutions but for the performance of coordinated health policies and plans. The area of standards offers the opportunity to consider the elements which primary care information systems should contain. Very soon multimedia facilities will be integrated in the design of these systems with the objective of facilitating patient care and reducing costs.

The evolution of standards will depend on the attitude developed by all stakeholders. This is a particularly important time, given the revolution occurring in the information world in which we are immersed. In the commercial sector, companies that remain indifferent to the standardization process and allow others to decide its key aspects run the serious risk of being excluded from any possibility for competitiveness. Moreover, health institution administrators that are indifferent to the standardization processes may see their investments endangered and themselves burdened by technological solutions inappropriate for their real needs.