

## MINI SYMPOSIUM

### Towards objective medical decisions with the aid of knowledge based systems

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| 1. Background: Current State of the Art  | F.T. de Dombal (UK)  |
| 2. Clinicians Needs and Requirements:<br>Pragmatic,<br>Conceptual,                       | N. Zoltie (UK)<br>J. Henriques (Portugal)                                    |
| 3. Technical progress towards meeting needs  | G. Maunder (UK) and P. Cusimano (UK)   |
| 4. Specific practical considerations:<br>Safety and security,<br>Evaluation and Quality, | J. Davey (UK)<br>O. Winding (Denmark), S. Clamp (UK) and C. Ohmann (Germany) |
| 5. Round Table Discussion.<br>Future Action and Prospects                                |  |

#### Introduction to mini symposium

This is the first in a series of mini symposia on aspects of biomedical engineering – often controversial – which transcend traditional discipline boundaries. Such a situation has necessitated some careful thinking, writing, and editing. All too often in the past similar “symposia” have represented merely a collected series of technical articles in which authors from different disciplines have set out explanations which are totally incomprehensible to those without a background involving the discipline in question.

This leads us nowhere. Neither can it be permissible in a journal dedicated to fostering contacts and understanding between different disciplines.

Therefore, instead of the customary format, specific instructions have been issued to contributors to this mini symposium. They have been asked to agree to write contributions with sufficient clarity so as to be understood by each of the

other contributors – as if a symposium had, in fact, taken place in front of an invited multi-disciplinary audience (even though this was not so). The authors have been asked to contribute plain language summations concerning issues rather than technicalities. To borrow a current phrase from Hollywood, they have been asked to contribute “postcards from the edge” so as to address in widely comprehensible fashion one or more of the following questions:

- What is the current state-of-the-art?
- What are the requirements of practising users and clinicians?
- What is technically available to satisfy these requirements?
- What are the specific practical problems in implementation?

My fellow contributors (drawn from the UK, Denmark, Germany and Portugal) are well placed to accomplish this task. Dr. Zoltie and Dr. Henriques are busy practising clinicians. Mr. Davey, Mr. Maunder and Mr. Cusimano are associated

with different important aspects of the computer industry. Professor Winding and Mrs. Clamp both have completed international studies relating to health care quality; whilst Dr. Ohmann is currently involved in the important German National studies concerning decision support, and a former member of COMAC (Epidemiology).

If, therefore, after scanning through this mini symposium, the reader has an overall grasp of the

achievements to date and the problems outstanding, the mini symposium will have succeeded. If this is not the case, the mini symposium will have failed. We naturally hope the former case will be true – although in due course, time (and our readership) will tell us whether this is so or not.

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