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Telehealth for Universal Health Coverage

Alexandra Monteiro[1]

That was the subject of the VIIth Brazilian Telemedicine and Telehealth Congress, the XXth International Conference on Telemedicine and Telehealth, and of Rio de Janeiro Telehealth Symposium – CBTms2015 [1]. Sponsored respectively by the Brazilian Council of Telemedicine and Telehealth, the International Society for Telemedicine and Telehealth and the Telehealth Center of Rio de Janeiro State University, the event took place in October of the year in which the city of Rio de Janeiro turned 450 years.

The principle of universality, along with equity and integrity as a means of equalizing the access to health rights, was discussed about different approaches, such as the use of information and communication technologies – specially Telehealth - as an optimization tool to serve the population; the remote support to specialists; the open access to content update and further training and the provision of educational material of open access to the population for health promotion; and disease prevention. The research lines were 'Tele-health education' and 'Tele-assistance', with 243 research abstracts submitted from Brazil and other countries, of which 132 were accepted for presentation - 92 concerning Tele-education, and other 40, Telecare.

In addition, fourty-two thematic panels were presented; they involved the exchange of Brazilian experience with representatives from the five continents (including legal aspects for intercountries relation concerning Telehealth) which have established networks for possible collaboration in supporting Telehealth as a means for universal health coverage. This special edition of the Brazilian Journal of Telehealth, therefore, presents a summary of CBTms2015, making available the abstracts of the papers.

On time, our special thanks to the members of the Judging Committee, who invested part of their valuable time on this selection, and to the International Society of Telemedicine and Telehealth, by holding the International Conference in Rio de Janeiro. ∎

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[1] CBTms2015. [Cited 2016 May 05]. Available from: http://www.telessaude.uerj.br/cbtms2015.

1. President of the VII Brazilian Congress of Telemedicine and Telehealth, XX International Conference of the International Society for Telemedicine and eHealth and Rio de Janeiro Telehealth Symposium [CBTms2015]; on October 27-30, 2015, at Rio de Janeiro State University – Brazil.

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VII Brazilian Congress of Telemedicine and Telehealth by the Brazilian Council of Telemedicine and Telehealth

Luiz Ary Messina[1]; Claudio de Souza[2]; Ana Estela Haddad[3]

Holding the XXth World Conference on Telehealth and the VIIth Brazilian Congress on Telehealth, by the Brazilian Council of Telemedicine and Telehealth CBTMS, in partnership with the International Society for Telemedicine and eHealth ISfTeH, was a milestone to raise awareness about the possibilities and application opportunities of Telehealth for Universal Health Coverage. The Brazilian model of national implementation of telehealth, recognized worldwide by PAHO and WHO, as an excellent example of what a country can and has done for Telehealth, based on investments made over 10 years by the federal government, Ministries of Education, Health, Science and Technology, has been shown during CBTMS 2015 with 620 participants and representation from all continents, in various applications: ICT infrastructure, ethics, mental health, emergency, intensive and highly complex care, indigenous health, tele-education, social networks, regulation, assisted medicine for scientific computing, teledentistry, primary care, health informatics, interoperability standards, health research and innovation projects, elderly health, telephysiotherapy, teleradiology, electronic health records, mobility, civil law, security and digital certification, human milk bank, telepsychiatry, tele-nursing, hospital management, health of children and adolescents, telehansen, extreme environments, expansion of telehealth models, among others. International experiences also represent important highlights to identify new concepts and practices, illustrating comparative and evaluation methods. The basic definition from WHO and the Brazilian Medical Council CFM focused on permanent remote education, remote assistance and collaborative integrated research, no longer sustain without the fundamental inclusion of monitoring mechanisms, remote management, and especially the constant evaluation of health processes, today perfectly capable of being carried out by the Telehealth in supporting Coverage Universal health. Telehealth assumes this way the permanent application of vaccine function for improved health processes, and even more on prevention through statistics online assessments in real time, allowing a gradual and effective feedback on the processes. Another important milestone in parallel to the event was, after three years of joint effort, the signing of the 'Moscow Declaration of the BRICS' on Oct 28th 2015, live broadcast from Moscow, Russia, for the main event hall, exactly during the opening of CBTMS 2015 inserting Telehealth in the item 8 of the Work Plan. "The BRICS national research institutions are encouraged to consider collaboration under BRICS thematic leadership in Biomedicine and life sciences such as: Integrated telemedicine systems in the regions of BRICS; international consortium and center of transfer of technology in the field of Biomedicine; systems of pharmacological consortium with the aim to resolve the problem of "medicinal safety", microbial resistence and response to epidemic and emerging diseases". And continuous: " Creation of experts network from BRICS countries

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to support the development of compatible telemedicine systems in BRICS regions". This is an undeniable proof of the importance of the theme for the new concept of collaborative and cooperative health in the world, especially in countries with continental geographic coverage, such as Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, represented in the Telemedicine panel in BRICS countries Oct 30th in CBTMS 2015.

10 years of implementation of telehealth as a national public policy in Brazil, supported by the federal government through permanent investments of the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, achieved amazing results, not only in the national expansion scenario and consolidation, but also having its importance recognized and guaranteed by international partnerships. ∎

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XX International Conference of the International Society for Telemedicine and eHealth (ISfTeH) - Rio de Janeiro 2015

Yunkap Kwankam[1]

This special issue of the Brazilian Journal of Telehealth captures the spirit and the essence of the 20th International Conference of the International Society for Telemedicine and eHealth (ISfTeH), the 7th Brazilian Telemedicine and Telehealth Congress, and the 1st Rio de Janeiro Telehealth Symposium – which were all held jointly on the Maracana campus of the Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ) on 28 - 30 October, 2015. Many remarkable activities took place at this meeting, which left me, from the perspective of the ISfTeH, with a sense of achievement and provided inspiration for the way forward in digital health. For the sake of brevity of this editorial, I will limit myself to just three.

The first was the theme of the conference and the engagement of the participants with the subject. "Telehealth for Universal Health Coverage (UHC)" was a very aptly chosen theme, as the world of health transitioned from the health Millennium Development Goals (goals 3, 4 and 5), to the Sustainable Development Goals. WHO had identified the goal of universal health coverage as ensuring "*that all people obtain the health services they need without suffering financial hardship when paying for them*". The conference delved into what Telemedicine and eHealth can contribute towards the achievement of UHC. Technology, especially information and communications technology (ICT), continues to redefine the way we look after our health. The deliberations, debates and discourses of the conference gave strong support to the thesis that in the 21st century, the goal of UHC cannot be achieved without Telemedicine and eHealth.

The second was the bold vision laid out for the future of the Society in the digital health era – a vision which sees the ISfTeH reinventing itself in line with developments such as, the creation of a permanent secretariat and greater engagement with the corporate world. A 20th anniversary is a good opportunity for reflection and for making big plans for the future. The ISfTeH seized the opportunity of the 20th anniversary of its international conference to do just that.

A third aspect that marked the conference for the ISfTeH was the launch of the Report of the Innovation Working Group (IWG) Task Force on the Global Knowledge Commons for m-eHealth Innovations. I had the privilege to co-chair the Task Force and the report was printed at UERJ, thanks to a small grant from the Norwegian international cooperation agency, Norad. In four chapters, the report addressed the key challenge facing digital health – how to convert our collective knowledge into a global public good, that is accessible to all, thus enabling each actor in the ecosystem to benefit from what others know. The document postulated that a Global Knowledge Commons (GKC) for innovation in health or simply "the Commons", would leverage existing repositories of the digital health space, and lead to five significant beneficial outcomes: 1) Digital intelligence at-a-glance through dash-boards by geography, application area and thematic area; 2) Clearinghouse for intellectual property (IP) on digital health issues; 3) Development of

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new knowledge as well as the reinforcement of partnerships; 4) More effective and efficient use of eHealth resources through better use and re-use of digital health experience; 5) Availability of instruments for transforming the knowledge from the Commons into new products and services through creation of product development partnerships (PDPs) and incubator systems for digital health innovation.

Nearly six hundred copies of the report were distributed to participants. The Rio conference thus served to launch the next phase in the dream to build a knowledge Commons for digital health.

This special edition of the Brazilian Journal of Telehealth stands as a permanent tribute to the hard work, planning and dedication on the part of many organizations and individuals, which led to the success of the Rio conference. I trust that it will also inspire its readership, to greater heights in the cause of using ICT to improve health at the level of individuals, localities, countries and globally. ▪