



- H. DOMINIC COVVEY, EDUCATION EDITOR -

Health Informatics in the West Coast Mountains

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I recently had the honor of being invited to lecture at the Oregon Health and Sciences University (OHSU) Division of Medical Informatics and Outcomes Research in Portland. This program is headed by Dr. William Hersh, well-known in the Health Informatics community and a frequent contributor to the Journal of the Medical Informatics Association (JAMIA). There was enough time to see his facilities, meet with a number of the faculty, and even to sit in on one of Joan Ash's classes, another "name" known widely for her contributions to the People and Organizational Issues (POI) area of Health Informatics. I'm writing about them because frankly I was impressed out of my tree. I guess I should have known I would be, given their prolific publication record, but I was surprised. Based on my experience there, I have decided that, as I visit various programs, I will write up a brief overview and bring them to the awareness of readers of this magazine.

The OHSU program is one of the largest recipients of funding from the National Library of Medicine, and its postdoctoral program is funded by the NLM, the Department of Veteran's Affairs, and the National Science Foundation. There are about 50 faculty in the Division (about 13 full-time with the remainder being part-timers, joint appointments, and adjuncts), and the faculty hold many research grants.

OHSU offers several Medical Informatics programs:

A MASTER OF SCIENCE IN MEDICAL INFORMATICS.

This program consists of 60 credit hours divided between 48 hours of course work and 12 hours of master's thesis work. The school year is organized into 4 quarters, and students generally complete the program in 5-6 quarters. The curriculum addresses 4 areas: Medical Informatics, Health and Medicine (including ethics), Computer Science, and Quantitative Methods (e.g., statistics, epidemiology, and health data analysis). The catalog lists 19 courses, plus several independent study, research, and practicum offerings. A bachelor's degree is required, along with pre-requisites in computer programming, anatomy and physiology, and the Graduate Record Exam and TOEFL.

A POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP IN MEDICAL INFORMATICS.

The primary focus of this program is to provide a structured research experience in areas such as: clinical information systems, computer-based patient records, information retrieval, neural networks, medical decision making, outcomes research and several others. Fellows survey a field broadly during a 2-3 year sojourn in the program and are expected to complete research projects. The objective is to prepare trainees to direct their own HI research efforts or to take leadership positions in hospitals or companies. Pre-requisites include an M.D., with residency training preferred, or

a Ph.D. or other doctoral-level degree, preferably in an HI-related area. Financial support is available for U.S. citizens and permanent residents only.

A DISTANCE LEARNING GRADUATE CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN MEDICAL INFORMATICS.

The OHSU distance program was developed with the needs of the working professional in mind. Participants take 1-2 courses per term and require about 2 years to complete the program. Students in the certificate program can also cross over into the master's program by applying courses that they take on-line to the M.S. degree, pending formal acceptance into the M.S. program. Students in the distance program are required to take 8 courses totaling 24 credit hours.

Two Canadians are currently pursuing their master's degree at OHSU Tad Hiruki (hirukit@oshu.edu) and Dat Tran (tranda@oshu.edu) and I am sure they would welcome discussing the program with interested parties. I got to meet Dat when I was there.

Another interesting aspect of the visit is that one of my talks was presented via videoconferencing over Internet 2 to OHSU's eastern partner, the University of Pittsburgh. Yet another Canadian was present at the UPitt end, Anne McKibbin (mki@cbmi.upmc.edu), who was a contributor to our Model HI Curriculum Development project. They're everywhere; they're everywhere!

If you would like further information on the program, visit www.ohsu.edu/bicc-informatics, call 503-494-4502, or write to:

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Erratum: Last issue I attributed the quotation "Who ordered that?" to Enrico Fermi. Well, I should never trust my memory: it was Isador Rabi