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USNC 2023 IEC Young Professionals Competition
Candidate Essay

The Future of Standards Development in Medical Imaging

The field of electrotechnical standardization is poised for a dynamic future. The development of standards will continue to shape the landscape of technological advancements, facilitating seamless integration of these emerging technologies. Within the medical imaging industry, one standard in particular has had a profound impact on data exchange and interoperability protocols. Digital Imaging and Communications in Medicine (DICOM) was collaboratively developed by the American College of Radiology (ACR) and the National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA) in the 1980's. DICOM has since grown to become *the* international standard for storing and exchanging medical images. DICOM provides an open-access, common language that has revolutionized medical imaging by enabling the exchange of medical images across various vendors and healthcare institutions. This ability to efficiently store and share imaging data has enhanced healthcare access and improved patient outcomes worldwide. As medical imaging technology continues to evolve, standards development must adapt to include the latest technological developments, address security concerns, and facilitate the integration of AI technologies.

Looking ahead through the lens of DICOM, several key trends are likely to shape the future of standards development in medical imaging. Like all electrotechnical industries, developing standardized processes requires harnessing the latest, cutting-edge innovations so as to maximize their utility. DICOM has proven its ability to evolve over time, incorporating new technologies quickly by utilizing a streamlined, easily accessible process for maintaining and adding to the Standard. Its continued adaptability will be crucial in managing the integration of emerging imaging modalities.

Another challenge for the future of medical imaging standards is the need to prioritize robust security measures and patient privacy. With the increasing digitization of medical imaging and the interconnected nature of healthcare systems, protecting patient data and ensuring privacy are paramount. The future of standards development should encompass protocols for data encryption, access controls, and auditing mechanisms to safeguard patient information. Additionally, the evolving landscape of data protection regulations, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), will necessitate the development of standardized protocols for data anonymization, patient

consent management, and data retention. DICOM's role in spearheading secure and privacy-centric practices will be instrumental in shaping such standards.

It would be difficult to discuss the future of nearly any industry without mentioning the impact of artificial intelligence (AI). The integration of AI technologies holds tremendous potential for enhancing diagnostic accuracy and efficiency in medical imaging. Future standards development should focus on establishing protocols for seamlessly integrating AI algorithms with imaging devices. DICOM has already begun to adapt to the changing landscape of medical imaging by incorporating new standards for AI and Machine Learning (ML) applications. The DICOM standard now includes modules for describing deep learning models, allowing developers to describe the architecture, weights, and biases of their models. This information can then be shared between institutions and used to train and validate models across different clinical settings. The continued incorporation of AI and ML standards into DICOM will be crucial for the development and validation of new imaging technologies that rely on these approaches.

The future of standards development in medical imaging holds immense potential for transforming healthcare delivery. By embracing advancements in technology and addressing emerging challenges, standards like DICOM will continue to foster enhanced data exchange, facilitate AI integration, ensure data security and privacy, and promote interoperability and workflow efficiency. The future of standards development in the electrotechnical standardization community heavily relies on international cooperation to tackle the challenges of a rapidly evolving landscape. By addressing these trends and challenges together, the community can continue to foster seamless communication among electronic devices, systems, and services, ensure safety and reliability, and drive innovation.