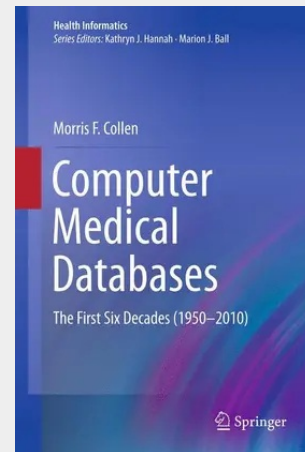


Computer Medical Databases

We have witnessed the evolution of medical informatics over the past six decades as we have moved into the new information era. It is clear that computers have had and continue to have a major influence on all of medicine. Computer Medical Databases: The First Six Decades (1950–2010) has been created by Dr Collen, the “Father of Medical Informatics”, to detail the journey from the very basic medical informatics databases to the hugely complex information systems that are now commonplace in clinics and large hospital groups globally. The medical informatics literature for the last six decades has been so voluminous that it is unfeasible for any review to be completely comprehensive, but the historical material presented is representative of the vast changes that have been observed, and will serve as a useful bridge between medical informatics from the past into the future. The emphasis is on the development of medical informatics in the United States, but concurrent developments in Canada, Europe, and Japan have certainly influenced this field in the United States. As such, this book will be a superb addition to the library of health informaticians in the U.S. and around the world.

Chapter 1 offers an overview of the basic computer technology. Each succeeding chapter, describes the problems in medicine, followed by a review in chronological sequence of why and how computers were applied to try to meet these problems. Only the technical aspects of computer hardware, software, and communications are discussed as they are necessary to explain how the technology was applied. This approach generally led to defining the objectives for applications of medical informatics. At the end of each chapter, the author summarizes his personal views and interpretations of the chapter contents. Although the concurrent evolution of medical informatics in Canada, Europe, and Japan certainly influenced workers in the United States, the scope of this historical review is limited to the development of medical informatics within the United States. Furthermore, this review is limited to electronic digital computers; it excludes mechanical, analog, and hybrid computers.



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