

a report by

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The world today is becoming increasingly borderless and more globalised. Investment in healthcare globally is high and, due to new information technology, the market and demands are becoming much the same all over the world.

A crisis in health is being faced in many countries, with similar problems in trying to meet rising demand with fewer healthcare personnel to cater to this demand, to contain rising costs and yet to ensure that there is choice, and that providers are responsive to the needs of individuals.

Quality is high on the agenda. Providers wonder how to establish professional standards audits and how to demonstrate the quality of their service to purchasers and, in some cases, to referrers and clients. Purchasers wish to specify quality in contracts in addition to price and quantity.

The 21st century is considered to be the 'century of the engineer' – with healthcare engineers being a major driving force in shaping society. In the field of medicine, engineers and the technological advancements they make will enable society to have affordable, high-quality care and services.

The era in which we live is often referred to as the 'Information Age'. I personally view this time as a precursor to a more highly significant period – the 'Technological Age', which will affect our world to an as yet unimagined extent. Predicting a technological future and its impact on society as a whole is not as difficult as visualising how it will actually happen. I am convinced, however, that the impact will be significant and holds the potential for more exciting, interesting and higher-quality lives for individuals.

This Technological Age – also called 'the golden age of engineering' – will carry with it a great deal of

responsibility. More and more societal responsibilities will shift towards engineers. This is a challenging prospect requiring major rethinking of how engineers deal with their responsibilities – as professionals and as citizens of the world. It will require them to be more involved in the operation of hospitals, healthcare institutions and centres – and more involved in the operation of the world as a whole.

The International Federation of Hospital Engineering (IFHE) is uniquely placed as the only worldwide professional/technical organisation bridging the many fields of healthcare engineering, design, construction, maintenance and estate management in this most significant era in the history of hospital technology. IFHE has members in more than 30 countries and represents over 10,000 individuals in all spheres of healthcare engineering. It arranges an international congress every two years where knowledge and experiences are shared. The next of these – the 18th Congress – will be held in Orlando, Florida in 2004.

Business Briefing: Hospital Engineering & Facilities Management 2003 – the second business briefing in the World Markets Series on the subject of healthcare engineering – is a visible result of the desire of IFHE to contribute from its store of membership expertise to the production of substantial information and data, directly linking the suppliers of equipment technology and service essentials in the continuing development of healthcare provision.

In this global environment, there is need for regularly updated publications such as this, produced and distributed by World Market Research Centre (WMRC).

On behalf of IFHE and our publishing partner, WMRC, I would like to thank our collaborators and contributors to this publication. ■

