

## Abstract submission

6th UK Social Networks Conference, Manchester 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> April 2010

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Name

Roberto Dandi

Institution

Please provide your Institutional Affiliation  
LUISS Guido Carli University, Rome, Italy

Email address:

[rdandi@luiss.it](mailto:rdandi@luiss.it)

Co-Authors

If more than one author, please provide details of all authors of the paper

Americo Cicchetti, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Rome, Italy

[acicchetti@rm.unicatt.it](mailto:acicchetti@rm.unicatt.it)

Maria Pia Fantini, Università degli Studi di Bologna, Italy

[mariapia.fantini@unibo.it](mailto:mariapia.fantini@unibo.it)

Daniele Mascia, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Rome, Italy

[dmascia@rm.unicatt.it](mailto:dmascia@rm.unicatt.it)

Simona Mattia, Università degli Studi di Bologna, Italy

[simona.mattia@unibo.it](mailto:simona.mattia@unibo.it)

Paper Title

Integrating Knowledge in Paediatric Care

Abstract

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Integrating specialised knowledge is one of the main challenges of healthcare systems and organizations because of the variety and interdependency of healthcare professionals. Clinical knowledge is actually dispersed across several departments of the same hospital and across different healthcare organisations and professionals scattered in the territory. At the same time, clinical pathways make professionals with the most different specialisations and affiliations interdependent with each others. In paediatric care, paediatricians need to be integrated among them and with hospital specialists and analysts in order to increase the quality and continuity of services and to reduce the costs of hospitalizations. Our study focuses on one form of integration of paediatric care: advice networks among paediatricians, and between paediatricians and hospital specialists. In Italy paediatricians are usually scattered across territories thus being organizationally and physically isolated from each others. However, one of the main forms of collaborations among them is advice seeking. In fact, clinical guidelines and handbooks cannot be the only sources of information and

expertise: the variety and variability of situations, patients, drugs, and competencies, are too high to permit a strict standardization of assistance. In this study we explore the role of colleagues in retrieving and adapting clinical knowledge to specific patients, and we identify the antecedents of the selection of the colleagues for this advice. Data come from the paediatricians of four Local Health Units (ASL), for a total of around 200 paediatricians contacted. The survey deal with advice seeking behaviour between paediatricians and from paediatricians towards other specialists. Consistently with the data structure produced by our relation-based observation scheme, in the empirical part of the study we specify dyad-oriented statistical models for the analysis of interpersonal networks. Specifically, we estimate Exponential Random Graphs Models (ERGM) that allow us to investigate about complex forms of local dependence between individual dyads, while testing hypotheses about the effects of individual-specific attributes on the propensity to integrate health care activities throughout collaboration. The results provide a network-based map and a measure of integration in the paediatric sector and suggest policy recommendations in order to foster this collaboration.