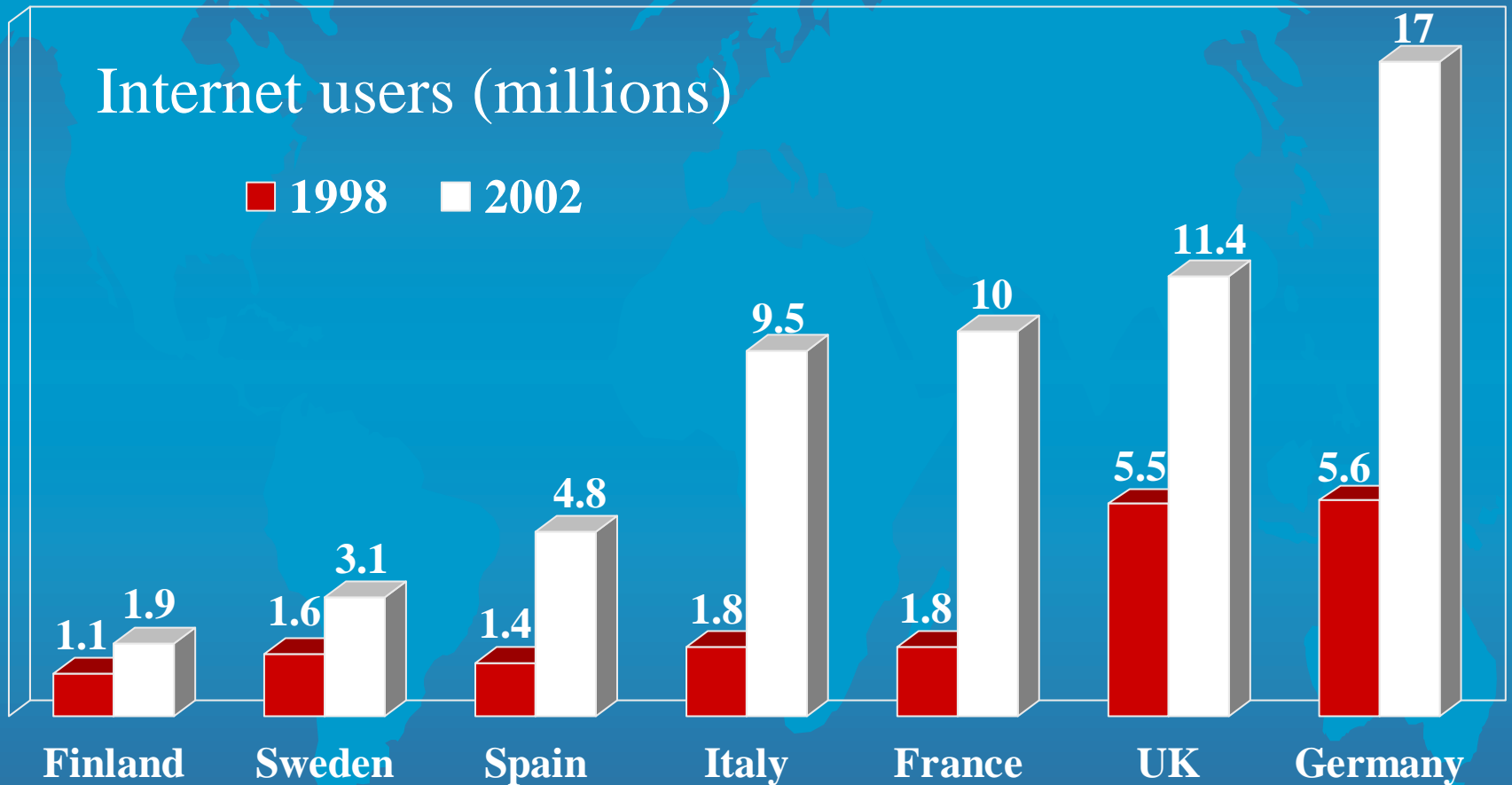


*The Role of Information and  
Communication Technology in Health*

*Dr Michael Scholtz  
World Health Organization  
February 2003*



# Internet growth, Western Europe



*Today we can exchange health information and provide services across geographic, time and social boundaries*

Radiology Glossary - Anatomy, Examinations, and Procedures - Microsoft Internet ...

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Address <http://rad.usuhs.mil/glossary.html> Go Links

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W

and dorsal to the pharyngeal orifice of the auditory (Eustachian) tube.

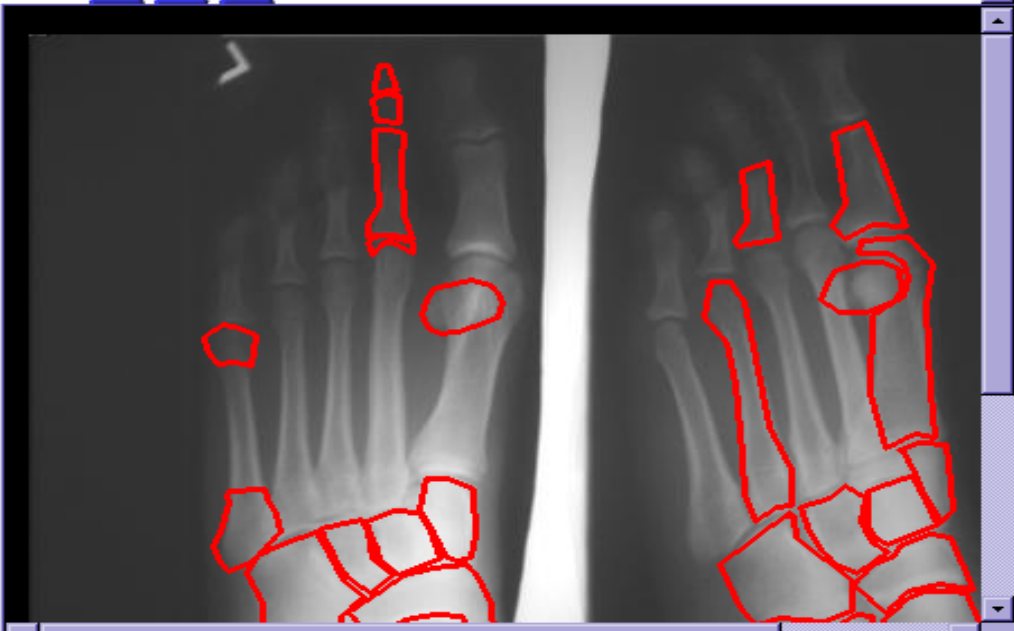
[image](#)

**PHALANGES:** The small tubular bones of the fingers and toes. [image](#)

**PHYSIS (GROWTH PLATE):** The portion of long bones concerned with growth in length. [image](#)

**PIRIFORM SINUS:** Fossa in the wall of the laryngeal pharynx that is lateral to the arytenoid cartilage and medial to the thyroid cartilage. [image](#)

**PITUITARY:** An endocrine organ



Internet

12 object(s) 287KB (Disk free space: 4.22GB) Local intranet

Start

13:43

*...but not everyone shares the benefits*



# *Global internet traffic flows*



*Source: Stephen G. Eick, Bell Laboratories; Cybergeography 2001*



## *Equity: Our biggest challenge*

*We can make a phone that fits in a pocket*

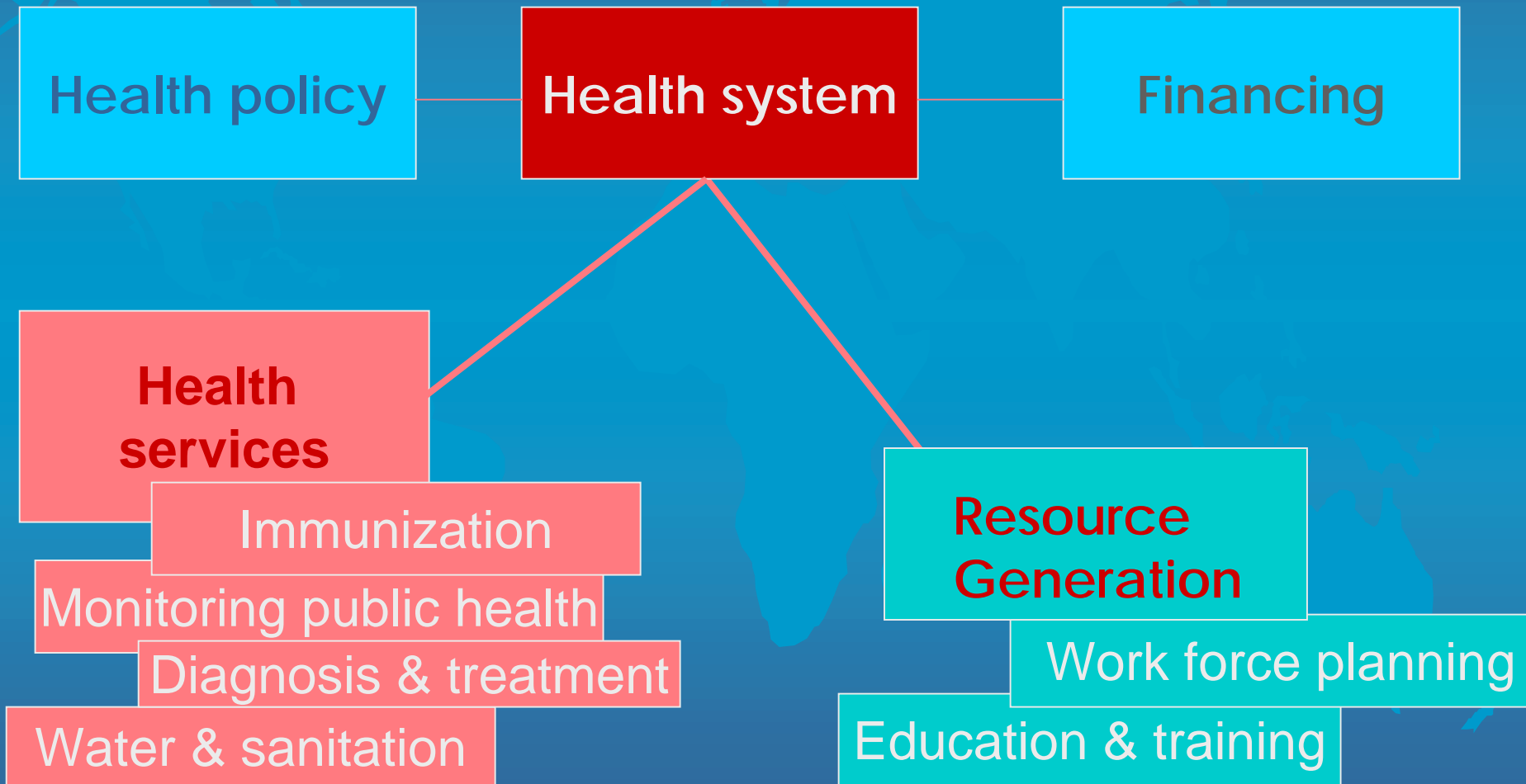
*Why can't we put phones in the poorest parts  
of the world?*

*The problem is not one of technology*

*The problem is one of will.*



# *Improving health: ICT impacts health systems at all levels*



# *What's needed*

## *Infrastructure*

- *affordable, reliable, durable high-speed telecommunications with a global coverage*
- *affordable rates, tariffs and services*

## *Technology and tools*

- *must be designed and developed based on user needs.*
- *cheap and rugged access devices*
- *people who can install and support them*





# *Education and training*

## *To access, use and manage information*



# *.....what's needed*

## *Policies and standards*

- *Universal, non-proprietary standards for information representation and exchange*
- *Guidelines for reliable health information*

## *Evaluation*

- *Evidence & experience to guide development*

## *Coordination*

- *Vertical systems impede real progress*



*Networks are vital: To share results, discuss theories...and communicate*



# *Example: Health InterNetwork*

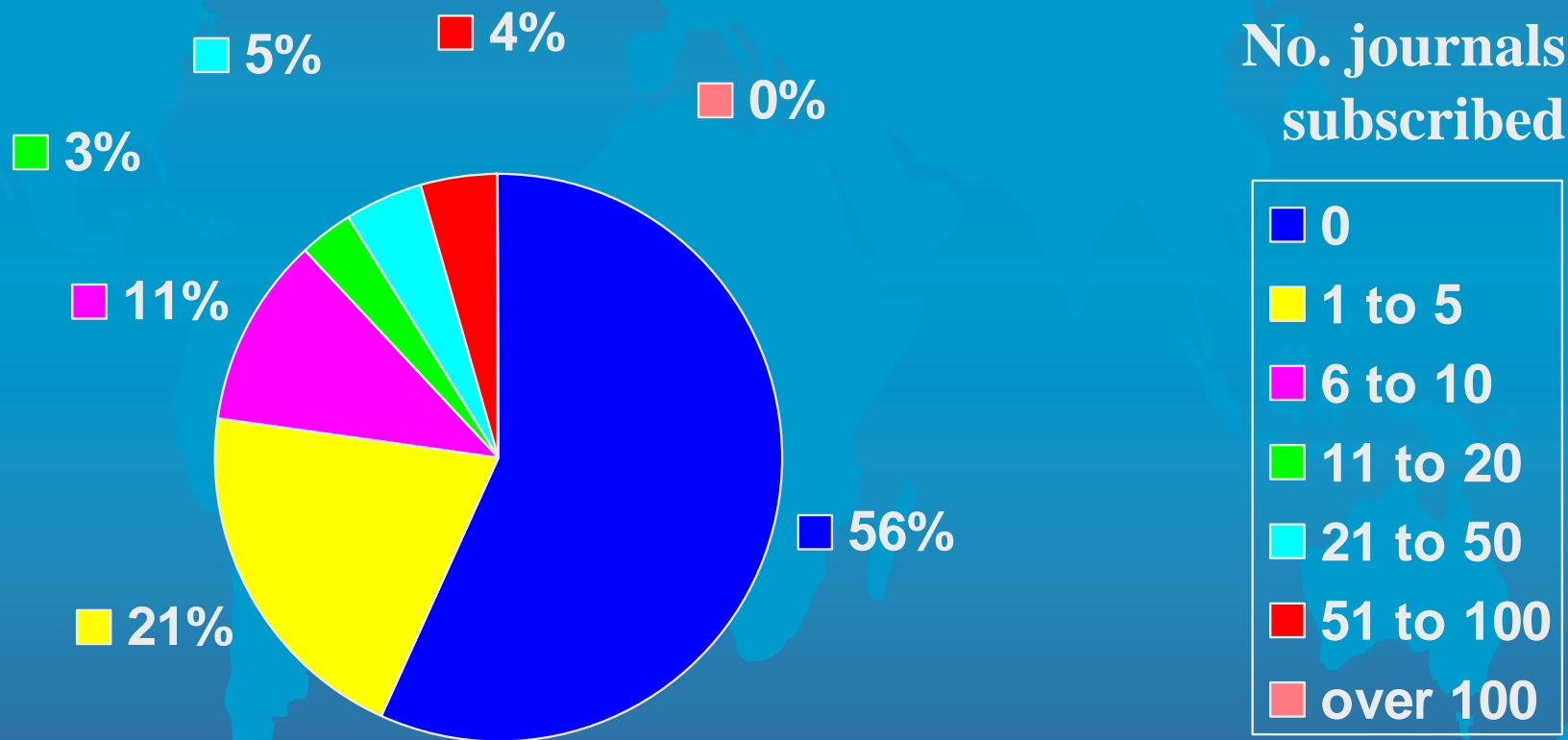
*One of four major initiatives of the United Nations Millennium Action Plan, launched in Sept 2000*

*Supporting existing public health programs and priorities through*

- *Content: relevant, high quality, affordable*
- *Connectivity: improving internet access*
- *Capacity: training to use health information effectively*



# Journal subscriptions in 130 health institutions in low-income countries



*"...you have taken us, by this act, from poverty to wealth in the fields of information".*

*El Hadj Boubacar Ball, Senegal*



## *Our vision*

*“Open and unrestricted access to information for health, a global good, by making full use of ICT in health system development”*

## *Guiding principle*

*“Equitable access to health information”*



# *Proposed Actions 1*

- *Finance, build and maintain ICT infrastructure and a pricing structure which reflects the ability of the health system to pay for services*
- *Ensure services to remote and underserved populations*
- *Address standards, norms, laws and regulation towards free flow of information for health*





## *Proposed Actions 2*

- *Address the challenge of ensuring ICT in an unstable world – maintaining services where there is internal instability, disaster and other conditions posing an extra threat to health*
- *Train and educate the health workforce, researchers and policy makers in making the best use of ICTs in health*



*Information & Communication  
Technologies for Health*

*More than an Application*

