
Imaging Essential within Collaboration Efforts Towards Personalised Healthcare



New drive to fortify cooperation among EU policy makers, healthcare industry and radiologists in quest to further individualise medicine.

A roundtable discussion initiated by the European Society of Radiology (ESR) and the European Alliance for Personalised Medicine (EAPM) took place on October 15 at the European Parliament. Featuring representatives from various stakeholder groups, the debate was hosted by Croatian MEP Dr. Biljana Borzan. The aim was to explore options that would improve current efforts made towards personalising healthcare in today's world challenged by financial austerity, demographic change and a constant increase in treatment options available.

According to Dr. Borzan, who appreciated the roundtable discussion approach, policy makers frequently undervalue the importance of radiology within personalised medicine. During the debate all participants concurred that individualised healthcare needed to evolve into the overall modus operandi of all areas in European healthcare systems, namely prevention, diagnosis and treatment. They defined personalised medicine as delivering the healthcare focus directly on the patient as an individual and unique medical case, with the aim of giving the right treatment for the right patient at the right time. Achieving this is possible if all stakeholders' contributions are combined.

Prof. Guy Frija, president of the ESR, confirmed that the current state of the world presented numerous obstacles in the quest to deliver individual medical care and that a tight cooperation between healthcare professionals, policy makers, patients and the industry as a whole was the way forward.

The chairman of the ESR Working Group on Personalised Medicine, Prof. Aad van der Lugt, and ESR expert Dr. Laure Fournier clarified the vital role played by medical imaging in personalised healthcare, from customised screening procedures for cancer tumours to collecting enormous amounts of data through population screening and correlating them with 'omics' data. They went on to list as main issues the growing quantity of cohort studies with imaging, the establishment of a European database of imaging biobanks as well as the guaranteed standardisation and validation of imaging biomarkers.

The need for a multi-stakeholder approach was echoed by the industry representatives present, Magda Chlebus from the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA) and Nichole Denjoy of the European Coordination Committee of the Radiological, Electromedical and Healthcare IT Industry (COCIR), who appealed to the policy makers to assist in setting up a framework to address the challenges faced in individualised medical care.

Several MEPs promised to contribute through ensuring adequate framework conditions and funding levels, among them one of the Rapporteurs for Horizon 2020, MEP Maria da Graça Carvalho, as well as Petru Luhan, along with Ciarán Nicholl and Tapani Piha, both European Commission representatives. It was agreed to allow both industry and researchers to determine the most suitable priorities and options for working partnerships.

Patient group representative Dr. Erik Briers, secretary of Europa Uomo (European Prostate Cancer Coalition), also agreed with the roundtable discussion findings and concluded that it was of extreme importance to invest in imaging research, since imaging provided for the overwhelming number of treatment decisions made in order to ensure the patient's survival with a sustained high quality of life.

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