

Big Data opens opportunities for improving healthcare when balanced with the right privacy of personal data

29 June – During its European Affairs Committee in the framework of the XXXVIth General Assembly in Antwerp, AIM, the International Association of Mutual Benefit Societies concluded that Big Data in healthcare gives a lot of opportunities that must be used, in good balance with the rights of patients to privacy of personal data. Data on diagnosis and treatment of citizens in addition to their healthcare status can lead to more personalized and effective treatment of the patients.



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Research of medical reports and treatment procedures of hospital information systems lead to more individual therapies and better preventive care. At the same time the protection of privacy and confidentiality of data needs to be guaranteed.

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Christian Zahn, AIM President

By using anonymized data analysis of the patients' physical and disease characteristics, doctors would be able to identify the most effective treatment. In particular, examinations and analysis in the field of inpatient care such as x-ray, computer tomography (CT) and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) or blood tests generate large amounts of data. Information centers such as Vektis in The Netherlands, confirm that data in the healthcare sector remain essential. However, the fact that a successful transplantation of a kidney can be predicted by big data, medical decisions should not only be based on algorithms. This decision should be left to the doctors.

Doctors emphasize that the growing number of new mobile health applications (mHealth apps), monitoring diabetic patients or addressing eye disorders at children, can be complementary tools in patient care. But doctors must be able to rely on external assessment of mHealth apps in order to trust these technologies.

A patient representative stated that patients with rare diseases are usually very lonely because of the lack of exchange with other patients with the same disease. Big Data projects give possibility to patients to connect all over the world and to support each other.

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AIM is the umbrella organisation of health mutuels and health insurance funds in Europe and in the world. Through its 64 members from 31 countries, AIM provides health coverage to 240 million people in the world and 209 million in Europe through compulsory and/or complementary health insurance and managing health and social facilities. AIM strives to defend the access to healthcare for all through solidarity-based and non-for profit health insurance. Its mission is to provide a platform for members to exchange on common issues and to represent their interests and values in the European and international Institutions.