

Press release

Digitisation of medicine is advancing: Holetschek extends flagship project "DigiMed Bayern - for the medicine of the future"



Handover of the extension notice to the DigiMed Bayern flagship project. f.l.t.r.: Verena Heidel (Project Manager, Deutsches Herzzentrum München), Dr. med. Veronika Sanin (Vroni study management, Deutsches Herzzentrum München), Prof. Dr. Dieter Kranzlmüller (Chairman of the Board of Directors Leibniz-Rechenzentrums), Dr. Jens Wiehler (Managing Director, DigiMed Bayern), Dr. med. Fabian Starnecker (Project Leader, HerzFit-App, Deutsches Herzzentrum München), Prof. Dr. med. Heribert Schunkert (Medical Director, Deutsches Herzzentrum München & Scientific Director, DigiMed Bayern), Prof. Dr. Horst Domdey (Managing Director Bio^M Biotech Cluster Development GmbH), Klaus Holetschek (Minister of State for Health and Care, StMGP), Dr. Jörg Traub (Project Manager Technologie & Director Gesundheit, Bayern Innovativ GmbH), Prof. Dr. Annette Peters (Director Institute of Epidemiology, Helmholtz Munich), Tina Engelhardt (Financial processing | Project Management Bavaria, Bayern Innovativ GmbH). © Bio^M

Martinsried, 12 September 2022 - The flagship project "DigiMed Bayern - for the medicine of the future" is being extended by one year. Bavaria's Minister of Health, Klaus Holetschek, personally handed over the extension notice to the managing Bio^M Biotech Cluster Development GmbH last Friday in the presence of top-class DigiMed Bayern partners from science and hospitals. DigiMed Bayern aims to prevent heart attacks and strokes and stands for data-based personalised medicine - using the widespread disease of atherosclerosis as an example.

The pandemic has shown how important science is in fighting crises. People with cardiovascular diseases have suffered particularly from COVID-19. In Bavaria alone, about 50,000 people died of cardiovascular diseases in 2020, about 6,500 from heart attacks, according to the Bavarian Heart Report. Prevention is the best protection: both to avoid the viral infection and to survive it in good health.

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With the aim of fighting heart disease through individualised prevention, diagnosis and therapy, the Ministry of Health launched the DigiMed Bayern pilot project in 2018 (www.digimed-bayern.de). The implementation of the work was challenged by the pandemic. Nevertheless, important milestones were reached. Now the flagship project has been extended for another year.

The DigiMed Bayern project is dedicated to the medicine of the future and is a significant step towards digitalisation for improved healthcare in the field of cardiovascular diseases. For this purpose, extensive health data of patients with atherosclerosis are collected and analysed. In addition, important activities for the prevention of heart attacks and strokes have been initiated.

Following the handover, those present discussed DigiMed Bayern projects that have already been successfully implemented: the free "HerzFit" app - the digital companion for heart health - has already found 50,000 users, and the Vroni study has already tested over 10,000 children in Bavaria for hereditary familial hypercholesterolaemia (FH). Furthermore, the work packages for generating and analysing high-throughput molecular data for personalised medicine have created a novel IT infrastructure for digital health data. All this despite the pandemic.

In this way, the HerzFit app was developed in cooperation with the German Heart Foundation (DHS), the German Hypertension League (DHL), the Techniker Krankenkasse and the Technical University of Munich. As a digital companion for heart health, the app enables the collection of individual health data and support for a healthy lifestyle with expert tips for prevention and a wealth of knowledge about heart health.

The Bavarian pilot study Vroni found the congenital lipometabolic disorder in over 100 of the children examined so far. These children have a significantly increased risk of serious cardiovascular diseases and thus of heart attacks already in young adulthood. Young patients diagnosed at an early stage can participate in a special training and treatment programme that enables them to live a normal life expectancy.

Klaus Holetschek, Bavaria's Minister of State for Health and Care, personally handed over the extension notice in Planegg to the managing Bio^M GmbH in the presence of the DigiMed Bavaria partners Deutsches Herzzentrum München and Helmholtz Zentrum and emphasised the successes of DigiMed Bavaria so far: "We are pleased to continue supporting this flagship project for a new medicine of the future in Bavaria. Patients at risk of heart attack or stroke are already benefiting from the project's successes to date. We are convinced that the further digitalisation and use of health data will contribute to improved healthcare for citizens."



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Prof. Dr. med. Heribert Schunkert, Medical Director of the German Heart Centre Munich and scientific director of DigiMed Bavaria added: "The HerzFit app and the Vroni study are concrete steps towards the prevention of cardiovascular diseases. Further health data from heart attack and stroke patients and their integrative evaluation will provide further, significant insights for the diagnosis and therapy of these diseases."

Dr. Jens Wiehler, Managing Director of the flagship project, explained the vision: "The healthcare system of the future and personalised medicine must be based more on the systematic analysis of health data in compliance with data protection regulations. DigiMed Bavaria is doing important pioneering work for this, especially in IT infrastructure. The digital revolution also in the health sector is a matter of course that should be driven forward by all stakeholders. Secure data use will be rewarded with better health with less burden on the healthcare system and also with sustainable economic strength - for the benefit of all patients and contributors."

DigiMed Bayern has been funded by the Bavarian Ministry of Health and Care with around 24.5 million euros since 2018.

About DigiMed Bavaria

The DigiMed Bayern flagship project started at the end of 2018 with approximately 22 million euros in funding from the Bavarian State Ministry of Health and Care (StMGP) as part of the BAYERN DIGITAL II master plan. The project goal is to integrate P4 medicine (predictive, preventive, personalised, participatory) in the specific indication of atherosclerosis into everyday clinical practice. The ultimate aim is to improve the prediction of disease risks, targeted prevention as well as diagnosis and therapy. To this end, extensive health data of patients with atherosclerosis are collected and analysed. The scientific director of DigiMed Bavaria is Prof. Heribert Schunkert from the German Heart Centre Munich. Bio^M Biotech Cluster Development GmbH is responsible for the management and project coordination. World-leading consortium partners from Bavaria such as hospitals, patient organisations and research institutions are also involved in the project.

More information at: www.digimed-bayern.de.

About Familial Hypercholesterolaemia

FH is a congenital disorder of lipid metabolism that, if left untreated, can cause severe cardiovascular disease at a young age. In Germany, it is estimated that there are over 270,000 carriers of the genetic defect, of whom only less than 1% are diagnosed. In FH, cholesterol is deposited on the walls of the blood vessels at a young age. Undetected and untreated, this can lead to vascular occlusion, heart attacks and strokes in early adulthood. The risk of a cardiovascular event is increased by a factor of 5 to 20 but can be reduced to normal if diagnosed early and treated consistently.

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About the Vroni Study

The Vroni Study aims to implement and evaluate a nationwide screening in Bavaria for children aged 5 to 14 years for the early diagnosis of FH. It is supported by the Bavarian State Ministry for Health and Care (StMGP). Up to 50,000 school children are to be tested. On this study basis, the diagnosis and therapy situation for affected persons of all age groups throughout Germany is to be improved in the future. Participation in the Bavaria-wide programme is free of charge and can take place within the framework of the screening examinations U9 to J1 (5 to 14 years), but also during any other visit to the paediatrician. Any family who would like to have their children examined can contact their paediatrician and adolescent doctor. The Vroni study is led by the German Heart Centre Munich (DHM), funded by the StMGP as part of the DigiMed Bavaria project and carried out in cooperation with the Professional Association of Paediatricians and Adolescent Doctors (BVKJ) LV Bayern.

Further information at: www.myvroni.de.

About Bio^M

For 25 years, Bio^M has been the networking organisation for the biotechnology industry in Munich and Bavaria, acting on behalf of the Bavarian Ministry of Economic Affairs. Bio^M supports the Bavarian biotechnology and pharmaceutical industry with an extensive network in establishing new business contacts. The cluster management offers interested parties from Germany and abroad central access and a wide range of information about the industry. Especially for prospective company founders, Bio^M offers comprehensive advice and specialised coaching, training and mentoring programmes with the virtual incubator inQlab and has been coordinating the m4 Award pre-founding competition in the field of biomedicine, which is funded by the Bavarian Ministry of Economic Affairs, since 2011. In total, Bio^M has accompanied over 200 start-ups. Bio^M also organises a wide range of training courses, events and network meetings.

Further information at: www.bio-m.org.

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