Brain Forum host debate on pressing need to digitalize healthcare
Debate says digital healthcare lags behind other sectors

Zurich, 15th June 2021.   The Brain Forum, a Swiss charity focused on advancing understanding of how the brain works, has hosted a debate in Zurich on the urgent need to accelerate the digitalization of healthcare In Switzerland and globally.

Commenting on the debate, Dr. Jamil El-Imad, CEO of The Brain Forum, said: "Healthcare across the world is undergoing a crisis of great magnitude. The Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic has exposed the need for urgent digitalization to optimise patient care. It will open the door to more efficient research, better productivity tools, better analytics, the use of AI for assisted diagnosis, better collaboration, early diagnostics, virtual care, personalized therapy, distributed virtual clinical trials and more."

Key topics in the debate include:
- The many different formats of patient data make it very difficult for clinicians working on one patient to share insights, collaborate, and act in a timely manner.
- The Panel called for better use of technology, including cloud-based platforms, to allow physicians to collaborate and even, enable remote diagnostics. There is a need in Switzerland, for interoperability across cantons - the Covid 19 crisis has rapidly exposed the need for a robust, standardised, interoperable technology platform for Its healthcare systems.
- Electronic Health Record Systems need to be designed n shareable form to allow cutting edge technology like AI or machine learning to analyse for better patient outcomes. Typically, these systems were created for administrative purposes and often lack the correct functionality.
- In this highly regulated sector, there is often significant resistance at a political and cultural level against sharing data, due to privacy and security concerns. The Panel called upon government and senior management to focus more on benefits, not just the risks, of sharing data. If there were a volume of anonymised data, this would help ***all*** patients by optimising knowledge sharing.
- There is also a debate about who 'owns' the data: the government, the medical authorities, or the patient.   The Panel called on patients to take control of their own data. Patients could benefit hugely by having their own health data accessible on their smartphones. Patients need to understand, for example, they can be empowered by owning their own data, and be more engaged in their own recovery. Equally, by agreeing to have their data stored in the Cloud, anonymised, and governed by a 'cooperative' of patients or a 'data commons' framework, citizens would know the knowledge pool created would serve the common good and help other patients. To do this, say the Panel, requires real citizen engagement.

The debate chaired by [Dr. Margrit Leuthold](#), former Deputy Director Future Health Technologies ETH, features the following speakers:

- [Prof. Dr. Thomas Grunwald,](#) former director at the Swiss Epilepsy Centre in Zürich., where his work focused on non-invasive and invasive evaluations of patients considered for epilepsy surgery and the medical treatment of patients with difficult-to-treat epilepsies. In February 2021, he founded the Zurich Epilepsy Institute, also works as epileptology consultant in three different Swiss cantons and continues to teach neurology at the Bonn University Medical Centre, Germany
- [Dr. Teresa Sollfrank,](#) Chief Product Officer at NeuroPro , who is working to establish a cloud-based platform for enhancing the interdisciplinary collaboration of health care professionals
- [Dr. Sean Hill,](#) inaugural Director of the Krembil Centre for Neuroinformatics at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto, Canada. He is also titular professor at Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, Switzerland.
- [Professor Dr. Ernst Hafen](#), ETH. Professor and founding member of the health data cooperative MIDATA, Professor Hafen Is a trained geneticist with a strong interest in human genetics and personalized medicine. He posits that an individual's control over his or her personal health data will be a key asset for better and more effective health care.

The debate Is available to view [here](#)

About the Brain Forum – brainforum.org
The Brain Forum, a wholly independent charitable foundation registered in Switzerland, first launched in 2013. It brings together world leaders in science, technology, healthcare, and business to advance our understanding of how the brain works and to accelerate the application of that understanding to human needs.

For more information and to request interviews, please contact:

The Brain Forum:
Chris Cartwright
E :chris@chriscartwrightcomms.com
T: +41 78 800 6290

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