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Successful debut for DMEA – Connecting Digital Health

- **“Small, agile steps“: Jens Spahn and Dr. Gottfried Ludewig provided an outlook for digitalisation plans**
- **Dorothee Bär appealed for greater courage moving forward with digitalisation in order to benefit patients and those in need of care**
- **Visitor numbers rose by eight per cent**

Attended by some 10,800 visitors, 570 exhibitors and 350 speakers, after three days DMEA, Europe’s leading event for digital health, came to a successful conclusion. Featuring new interactive formats with a wider range of topics and targeting a larger audience, the successor was able to reposition itself as the platform for digital healthcare.

Federal Minister of Health Jens Spahn took the opportunity DMEA offered to make an urgent appeal for speeding up digital health solutions and not to leave digital healthcare to others. “We must engage with the digital transformation. The alternative is not whether it will or will not happen but whether we will shape it or be dictated by it.”

The **Federal Chancellery’s State Minister for Digital Affairs Dorothee Bär** struck a similar chord in her keynote speech: “We have already talked so much. I would like to see more things being put into practice.” Obviously, issues such as data protection were important, she said. Nevertheless, Germany needed more courage where digital health was concerned in order to make use of the huge opportunities offered by digital medical applications and make life easier for the chronically ill, those in need of care, and the elderly.

Taking part in the new eHealth Hot Seat format, **Dr Gottfried Ludewig, head of the Digitalisation Department at the Federal Ministry of Health**, faced critical questions from a live audience and via Twitter and video messages. He also announced the introduction of a law on digitalisation, due in the second quarter of 2019. However, that was not enough, he said. It was necessary for digitalisation aspects to be included in every law, he added. “We want digitalisation to make concrete improvements to the healthcare system for individual patients by taking small, agile steps“, said Ludewig. Germany had a long way to go to catch up. “Every year 700 million prescriptions are printed. 80 per cent of the time, doctors and patients communicate verbally or in writing. We simply have to get a move on,”

The world was not going to stand still. Progress would not wait and changing patient demands were a reflection of this, said **Jens Naumann, CEO of the German Association of Health IT Vendors (bvitg)**. “It is the patients themselves who are taking an active interest in their health who represent the big driving force of digitalisation in the healthcare system. The other big driver is efficiency. Instruments for creating efficiency are needed to ensure affordable healthcare in the future and to drive innovation. In that respect one important instrument is the use of digital applications.”

According to **Jens Heithecker, director at Messe Berlin**, the changing conditions which digitalisation of the healthcare system had brought about were one of the reasons for the event’s new strategic direction. “We have come a long way. The question is no longer whether digitalisation will take place, but how. We see that digital technology has become essential in every area of the healthcare system – for patients, in medical practices and hospitals.” It was only logical therefore for DMEA – Connecting Digital Health to take on a new direction, he said. As the platform for digital healthcare DMEA targets everyone involved in the digital transformation of the

healthcare system – ranging from representatives of industry, politics, local government and research to users such as doctors and nurses.

Heiko Mania, managing director of the NursIT Institute GmbH: “DMEA is a unifying platform. It brings nurses together with the digitalised world and provides information. It presents new technology and shows how well interoperability can function. It is also able to send out a political message, namely that nursing becomes stronger with digitalisation.”

Jana Aulenkamp, a PhD student at Ruhr-Universität Bochum who is about to become a physician: “One can find out about new developments in the healthcare system, broaden one’s horizon and discover new startups, for example. As someone about to become a physician I am interested in the kind of methods I may be able to offer my future patients. Everyone is open for talks. It’s great fun.”