TELEMEDICINE
MEDICINE AND COMMUNICATION

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Preface

Within the various aspects of life-science technologies medicine and information technology will change next millennium’s quality-of-life fundamentally. Thanks to the rapid growth of telecommunication industry and the success and popularity of the internet the face of medicine will essentially change, because information technology is expected to play a major role in future health care systems.

The conference MEDICOM 2000 is a discussion forum on fast and cost efficient patient-data exchange systems between doctors’ offices, medical laboratories, telearchive services, health care insurances, highly specialized experts in hospitals etc. The conference brought together scientific, medical and application experts from university, clinical and commercial sites of both areas - medicine and communication - to stimulate synergy between these rapidly evolving future technologies.

We would like to acknowledge all the parties who contributed to the success of the conference. Especially, we would like to thank Gisela Niedzwetzki and Waltraud Ott for secretarial support as well as Dirk Thomsen for web mastering. Additionally, we have to acknowledge the valuable support of Holger Dörle, Thomas Giese, Peter Just, Stefan Klöckner, Heike Lahr and Kerstin Lüdtke-Buzug during the conference.

We would also like to thank all the reviewers from the MEDICOM program committee for their valuable help in the reviewing process. Last but not least, we would like to thank all our exhibitors and sponsors - especially Medical Net, New Office and the Kreissparkasse Ahrweiler - who made the conference possible. We would like to thank the “Strukturförderungsgesellschaft Bonn/Rhein-Sieg/Ahrweiler mbH” - especially Gisela Ditze and Rolf Beyer - for accepting MEDICOM 2000 as part of the Sciences Festival Bonn.
Boards

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Opening Address

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for inviting me to today's technical conference during Medicom 2000 here on the RheinAhrCampus in Remagen. I am extremely proud of this large scientific event here in the Ahrweiler district. The fact that Medicom 2000 is taking place here at "our Fachhochschule" underlines the growing significance of Ahrweiler as an important health and fitness region.

RheinAhrCampus is taking great strides in establishing itself in the region - as well as in the entire scientific community. The organizers have certainly backed the right horse with telemedicine by choosing a subject that has a bright future.

The world economy has witnessed dramatic change over the past few years. Market globalization and internationalization are occurring at breathtaking speed. This is just as true for the success of modern communication technologies. These are the driving forces behind economic growth, productivity and innovation. Innovative technologies are the main engine of growth and employment in Germany as well as throughout the world. Maintaining the lead through innovation - that is today's motto. The big fish no longer swallow up the little fish - instead the quick fish eat the slow.

This rapid development holds great promise for the health services, which are increasingly squeezed by enormous financial pressure. Information and telecommunication technologies offer many new and encouraging possibilities here; for example, I envision paperless doctor's offices and clinics, virtual networks of medical practices, or new forms of quality assurance.
Experts view telemedicine as the medicine of the next millennium - the new magic formula of modern healing. I feel that what many mockers refer to as "Nintendo surgery" offers great potential for the future. A patient can be in any operating room, for example here in Remagen, while a specialist on the other side of the world operates the scalpel via computer in San Francisco.

I challenge you to take advantage of the new mindset created by the new media and especially the Internet. Let us create a platform for telemedicine applications in the health services. Whether it is patient data, general medical knowledge or administrative files, we need an electronic health services network that meets national and international standards, embedded of course in a modern data security system.

There is a saying in English that whoever doesn't have time to take care of his health now will have to have time for his illness later. Since health is a person's most important asset, the health sector - apart from the information and telecommunication technologies - is becoming the boom industry of the future. What could be more natural than to combine these developments? In the district of Ahrweiler we have recognized this trend in good time and have set the course for the future. We are already way ahead of the race while others are still saddling the horses.

The RheinAhrCampus in Remagen is the flagship of Ahrweiler's health competence. The Fachhochschule is building on the strengths of our region with its innovative curricula. We can expect valuable synergy effects from our "Physical technologies" course of study with a focus on medical technology.

We are anticipating the beginning of construction of the Innovation and Start-up Center Sinzig (Innovations- und Gründerzentrum Sinzig or IGZ) in our immediate vicinity. The focus of the IGZ is also on health services, and one of its purposes is to ease the transitional phase for young entrepreneurs, who are fresh out of college and want to start their own businesses based on a future-oriented idea.

City planners are also intending to build a technology park in the county. They plan to attract companies from the future-oriented industries of biotechnology and health services, or more precisely medical technology, to the technology park.

The European Academy for the Study of Consequences of Scientific and Technological Advances in Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler is also contributing to the district of Ahrweiler's new profile.

The establishment of the Central Institute for Pharmaceutical Research and the Scientific Institute of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Research Association this year in Sinzig has made the "health web" in the district of Ahrweiler even more close-meshed.
These scientific facilities will be framed and linked together under the "Ahrweiler Health and Fitness Region" concept.

On the other hand, the educational and entrepreneurial opportunities in the district of Ahrweiler are a pillar in the overall structure of the Bonn/Rhein-Sieg/Ahrweiler region with all of its scientific facilities. We complement one another. We are all acting in concert. Together we are creating our own creative and attractive offer. We in the Bonn/Rhein-Sieg/Ahrweiler region have understood that the Europe of the future is a Europe of regions. Bonn/Rhein-Sieg/Ahrweiler is well on its way to becoming a region of science and research.

Through its economic and scientific endeavours, the district of Ahrweiler holds an excellent position in this competition, and today's conference at our Fachhochschule is the best proof of this. Ladies and gentlemen, let us continue on this path.

Landrat Dr. Jürgen Pföhler
September 28, 2000
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