

DATA-DRIVEN HEALTH FOR COMPASSIONATE AND ETHICAL CARE

The BioBeat20 Summit, hosted in partnership with the Francis Crick Institute, brought together the life sciences community to explore the opportunities for adopting and investing in data-driven health. A global audience with more than 200 attendees from across the UK, USA, Brazil and Europe joined the virtual meeting on 17 November.

Opening the summit, Miranda Weston-Smith, BioBeat Founder and Veronique Birault, Director of Translation at the Crick, highlighted how healthcare and health data have come to the fore this year as never before, generating huge respect and admiration for the sector. The COVID-19 pandemic has been an unprecedented accelerator of change. We've seen examples of innovation at incredible speed, building technology solutions, creating data pipelines and setting up clinical trials in a matter of weeks.

Keynote speaker Samra Turajlic, Group Leader at the Crick and Consultant Medical Oncologist at the Royal Marsden Hospital, described how large-scale data is driving progress in kidney cancer and melanoma. Through measuring and mapping tumour heterogeneity, Samra stressed the importance of using digital technology to improve sampling and analysis of large datasets. Fundamental to her work is compassionate, supportive care for cancer patients that improves quality of life as survivorship increases.

Two expert discussion panels, together with incisive questions from the audience, looked into the essentials of what data-driven health means for patients and entrepreneurs.

Patients must be at the heart of new digital health technologies across all stages of the product life cycle. Innovators should be asking patients, the public, clinicians and care teams what really works, building solutions from the bottom up rather than the top down.

Virtual wards, which allow patients to be safely monitored at home, and other digital technologies have seen an increase in uptake during the pandemic that is set to continue. Data-driven solutions aimed at women's health are emerging as an area to watch for the future. Another growth area is applications and wearables that enable deeper understanding and more effective management of long-term conditions such as diabetes, mental health and hypertension.

The health technology sector should always be aware of the issues arising around the use of patient data, such as privacy, security and consent, otherwise we risk losing public trust. Questions around how the private sector uses data generated through public funding aren't going to go away and need to be addressed through new financial models.

Digital healthcare and wellness is a growing market, offering shorter timelines and lower risk than conventional biotech approaches. As the worlds of technology and healthcare come ever closer together, we're seeing an increase in specialist UK and European investor funds focused on new and growing companies at the intersection of life sciences and technology.

Still, it's team, team, team all the way for building agile health tech companies with great science and a clear path to returns. A new cohort of UK entrepreneurs and early-stage start-ups is generating strong investor participation with potential to scale.

Health data collection and analysis is booming, helping us to understand what constitutes good health and understand diseases in greater depth than ever before. The BioBeat20 Summit showed that the UK has the opportunity to be a leader in delivering data-driven health in this fast-growing sector.

Continued overleaf

With thanks to all the speakers and chairs:

- Veronique Birault, Director of Translation, Francis Crick Institute
- Sarion Bowers, Head of Policy, Wellcome Sanger Institute
- Wendy Britten, former CFO, Congenica
- Barbara Domayne-Hayman, CBO, Autifony Therapeutics; Entrepreneur in Residence, Francis Crick Institute
- Tara Donnelly, Chief Digital Health Officer, NHSX
- Isabel Fox, Managing Partner, Luminous VC
- Pam Garside, Partner, Newhealth; Fellow, Cambridge Judge Business School (chair)
- Shardi Nahavandi, CEO and Co-founder, Pexxi
- Rayna Patel, CEO and Co-founder, Vine Health
- Heather Roxborough, Partner, Optum Ventures' Global Fund
- Felicity Sartain, COO and Co-founder, Closed Loop Medicine
- Samra Turajlic, Group leader, Francis Crick Institute; Consultant Medical Oncologist, Royal Marsden Hospital (keynote)
- Miranda Weston-Smith, Founder, BioBeat

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