News

Strengthened footprint for OPTIMA project in Scandinavia

The international research consortium announces the Region Uppsala as official new partner to support development, implementation and evaluation of OPTIMA's tools and guidelines in Sweden.

The public-private partnership OPTIMA (Optimal Treatment for Patients with Solid Tumours in Europe Through Artificial intelligence), funded through the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI) programme by the European Union and the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA) is working towards using artificial intelligence (AI) to improve cancer care. After the first two years of work with important milestones being achieved towards an interoperable, GDPR-compliant real-world oncology data and evidence generation platform in Europe, the consortium decided to add the Region of Uppsala to facilitate its work in Sweden.

The University Uppsala is already a partner in the consortium, but since the development and implementation of OPTIMA is being taken care of by regional cancer centres in a decentralised healthcare system such as in Sweden, this addition of the Region Uppsala is highly beneficial to the group.

The regional cancer centre is a department of the Region Uppsala and a key partner strengthening the footprint of OPTIMA in Sweden, as it works with knowledge management and is involved in the development of national knowledge support systems. Furthermore, it has the national responsibility to coordinate the development and support for using Individual Patient Overviews as well as support the development of National Clinical Cancer Care Guidelines.

"We are delighted to join the OPTIMA project, as our involvement in such research initiatives contributes to the continual advancement of knowledge, leading to the exploration of novel treatment options and improved therapeutic strategies for the best of patients with cancer", explains Gustaf Hedström, Director Clinical Quality Registries, Region Uppsala.

The OPTIMA consortium and the coordinators of the project, Prof. Dr James N'Dow from the European Association of Urology and Academic Urology Unit at the University of Aberdeen and Dr. Hagen Krüger, Senior Medical Director Oncology, Pfizer Germany, are very pleased about the addition of the Region Uppsala and the associated expansion of expertise within the project consortium.

Dr. Stefan Langhammer, a Medical Director at Pfizer, Germany, is pointing towards the importance of this addition as it further strengthens the OPTIMA work in Scandinavia.

Bertrand De Meulder, Scientific Director at EISBM, responsible for platform implementation and evaluation within OPTIMA further states that adding Region Uppsala expands the OPTIMA network of implementation sites in Scandinavia. Furthermore, this team has relevant experience that will help us propose a compelling, useful and user-friendly platform for clinicians and patients in the near future.

With the joining of the Region Uppsala the OPTIMA consortium brings together 38 partners from across 14 countries. It consists of private and public stakeholders in the clinical, academic, patient, regulatory, data sciences, legal and ethical and pharmaceutical fields.

The interoperable OPTIMA platform will host datasets, data analysis tools, federated learning tools, AI algorithms and electronic decision support tools to identify, prioritise and fill the main knowledge gaps in prostate, breast and lung cancer – and propose improved clinical guideline recommendations. The developed AI-based decision support tools shall be employed in electronic health records (EHRs), thereby helping clinicians make care decisions based on the leading clinical practice guidelines for prostate, breast and lung cancer.

The platform could allow for the processing of high-dimensional data across sources and the use of deep learning to identify factors that enable individualised, real-time care decisions – ultimately providing personalised treatment for patients with the three cancer types. Through artificial intelligence and integrated next-generation tools and models, the consortium hopes that OPTIMA will be a key driver in the development of personalised care that recognises each patient's individual needs.

OPTIMA builds on other IMI projects (such as EHDEN, PIONEER and Harmony) that are supporting the European Health Data Space (EHDS), a European Commission initiative to promote better exchange and access to different types of health data to support healthcare delivery and health research and policy. If successful, OPTIMA could not only contribute knowledge and data to the EHDS but may also inform European policy regarding the clinical deployment of AI algorithms in healthcare.