Chair of Non-Profit International Organization HealthAI: "The World needs the responsible use of Artificial Intelligence to build strong and resilient health systems that benefit all people"

Chairman of the Board of 'Health AI' Visits Korea, Encourages Participation of Ministry of Health and Welfare and Ministry of Food and Drug Safety in Regulatory Platform

(Seoul = Yonhap News) Reporter Han-Gi Seo – *"Regulations are essential for gaining consumer trust, launching products in a safe environment, and clarifying legal responsibilities. Without certification from a trusted organization and proper regulations, it is impossible to launch and use products in the market. That is why most scientists and companies want regulations. Global tech giants such as Microsoft and Google also advocate for regulatory frameworks."*

Dr. Christoph Benn, Chairman of the Board of *Health AI* (The Global Agency for Responsible AI in Health), a non-profit global health organization based in Geneva, Switzerland, recently visited Korea.

His visit aimed to explore collaboration opportunities with public and private healthcare organizations in Korea, including the Ministry of Health and Welfare, the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety, the Korea Health Industry Development Institute, the Research Investment for Global Health Technology Foundation(RIGHT Foundation), and the Korean Society of Artificial Intelligence in Medicine. Additionally, he sought to encourage these institutions to join Health AI's regulatory platform as members.

Regarding this, Dr. Benn visited the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety in Osong, North Chungcheong Province, on the 10th. He proposed that Korea join the Health AI regulatory platform and play a leading role in discussing strategic directions for health AI governance alongside global health and technology leaders from various countries.

Health AI's effort to engage Korea stems from its recognition of Korea as a global leader in AI technology and innovation. The organization believes that Korea could serve as a pivotal player in building a global health regulatory network.

Health AI is a non-profit international organization established in 2023 to promote responsible artificial intelligence in healthcare. It is primarily backed by three major international organizations headquartered in Geneva: World Health Organization (WHO),

International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

The organization acts as a bridge between international agencies such as WHO and ITU and national regulatory bodies.

It strengthens the regulatory capabilities of member countries, ensuring that AI-driven healthcare technologies meet the global safety, quality, and ethical standards set by these international institutions.

In other words, one of Health AI's key functions is to verify and support whether AI regulations and certifications established by individual countries align with international standards.

Currently, the Health AI Community of Practice (CoP) consists of over 200 institutions from more than 50 countries. Additionally, a leadership group composed of government, legislative, and regulatory officials from approximately 30 countries operates within the community.

With the emergence of generative AI technologies such as ChatGPT, the AI era is advancing at an accelerated pace, embedding AI deeply into all aspects of society and establishing it as an essential part of daily life.

The healthcare sector is no exception.

AI is being used in various areas of healthcare, including diagnosis, treatment planning, and patient monitoring.

By analyzing vast amounts of medical data, AI enables the early diagnosis and prediction of diseases like cancer. It also automates administrative tasks such as medical record documentation and patient scheduling, reducing the workload of healthcare professionals. AI plays a significant role in delivering personalized, tailored treatments based on a patient's genetic information and medical history.

Moreover, AI combined with wearable devices allows real-time monitoring of a patient's vital signs, enabling the early detection of abnormalities and alerting medical professionals for a swift response.

Conversational AI and chatbots provide a range of healthcare services, including patient consultations, symptom checks, and medication management.

Furthermore, AI accelerates the drug development process, predicts potential side effects,

and helps identify suitable candidates for clinical trials.

Given its role in driving innovation in healthcare and the numerous benefits it offers, AI is expected to continue evolving.

However, experts emphasize that AI implementation in healthcare requires an even more cautious approach and rigorous oversight than in other fields.

Key considerations include data accuracy, protection of patient privacy, and algorithm transparency, necessitating a thorough evaluation of ethical and legal issues.

Strict regulations and guidelines are required to ensure the safe development and operation of AI medical systems.

Dr. Benn reiterated the necessity of regulations, stating, "Just as vaccines for infectious diseases cannot be used without undergoing the certification process of a credible regulatory body, AI diagnostic devices must also meet rigorous standards to verify their accuracy and safety before entering the market to prevent misdiagnoses and other serious issues."

Original article

"A World Where Everyone Benefits from Healthcare—AI Accelerates this Future"

By Chae Ye-bin

Interview with Christoph Benn, Chair of HealthAI

The global healthcare system is facing significant challenges due to aging populations, the spread of infectious diseases, and shortages of medical personnel. In response, artificial intelligence (AI) is emerging as a key technology driving healthcare innovation.

Headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, HealthAI is an international non-profit organization established in 2023 to enhance the reliability and safety of AI-based medical technologies. Currently, over 150 institutions from 50 countries participate in HealthAI's Community of Practice (CoP), working towards establishing international standards and verification systems to increase trust in AI.

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the need for cross-border collaboration in healthcare. The COVAX Facility, a vaccine distribution initiative led by international organizations, was funded by governments and private non-profits, with pharmaceutical companies also collaborating with academia. However, the challenges of healthcare cooperation now extend beyond funding to the very structure of multilateralism itself.

Amidst these global trends, HealthAI is seeking solutions through collaboration with governments and private non-profits. To strengthen these partnerships, Christoph Benn, Chair of HealthAI, visited South Korea. In an interview with *The Better Future* on March 11, he stated,

"AI can drive medical innovation, and we hope South Korea will demonstrate global leadership in this field."

AI's Role in Expanding Access to Quality Healthcare

Q: How can AI contribute to the healthcare sector?

Benn: *"The goal of HealthAI is to ensure that everyone has access to quality medical services. AI plays a critical role in both developed and low-income countries. In aging societies, AI can provide personalized solutions, particularly in elderly care. In low-income*

regions with limited medical infrastructure, AI can assist with diagnosis and prescriptions. For instance, in remote areas without healthcare professionals, patients can receive AI-based medical consultations via smartphones."

Benn emphasized that **AI is making remarkable progress in medical diagnostics**. For example, access to MRI and X-ray interpretation varies significantly between developed and low-income countries. With AI, medical imaging data can be sent to specialized centers, enabling precise diagnoses even in resource-limited settings.

He also predicted an expansion of **AI's role in telemedicine**:

"Although still in its early stages, AI-powered virtual hospitals are becoming a reality. While generative AI models like ChatGPT can enhance accessibility to medical information, the issue of 'hallucinations'—AI-generated misinformation—must also be addressed."

Challenges in AI Adoption for Healthcare Systems

Q: What are the biggest challenges in integrating AI into healthcare systems?

Benn: *"One major issue is the significant variation in AI regulations across countries. While international organizations like the WHO have provided standard guidelines for AI-based medical technologies, the actual implementation varies widely. Developed countries have regulatory bodies overseeing health AI, but many nations lack institutions to test and certify AI tools. This creates difficulties in validating both the benefits and risks of AI in healthcare."*

To address this, **HealthAI is building a global cooperation network**. Benn explained,

"We act as a bridge to facilitate the sharing of experiences and information between countries. Our goal is to help developed nations like South Korea support the enhancement of healthcare capabilities in middle- and low-income countries."

The Most Critical Factor in Health AI: Data Quality

Q: What is the most important factor when implementing AI in healthcare?

Benn: *"AI learns from vast amounts of data, making data quality crucial for its success. The choice and use of data are key. For example, if an AI tool is developed using*

predominantly male-centric data, it may not be effective for women and could even pose risks. Ensuring representative datasets that account for gender, race, and minority groups is essential."

He particularly emphasized the need for **AI data collection in low- and middle-income countries**. Currently, HealthAI is in the early stages of **establishing a global AI governance framework**, with a focus on systematically compiling disease data in Africa.

Ensuring Sustainable Funding for Health AI

Q: What is HealthAI's strategy for sustainable funding?

Benn: *"With the U.S. government withdrawing from key UN agencies like the WHO and announcing the dissolution of USAID, international health organizations are facing an unprecedented crisis. As a result, alternative funding models have gained attention. Last year, at the G20 summit in Brazil, discussions focused on private resource mobilization and debt-swapping mechanisms.*

HealthAI has never received direct funding from the U.S., but we recognize the risks of relying on a small number of donor countries. It is crucial to diversify funding sources while aligning support with each country's economic capacity. Since healthcare is a global public good, it should be collectively supported by all nations."

Benn played a pivotal role in **innovative global health financing**. As a founding board member of the **Global Fund** in 2002, he spearheaded resource mobilization efforts as Director of External Relations from 2003 onward.

He was instrumental in the launch of initiatives such as **Debt2Health** and **Product RED**:

- **Debt2Health**: A debt relief program encouraging creditor nations to forgive developing countries' debts in exchange for reinvesting the funds into public health projects.

- **Product RED**: A funding campaign for HIV eradication, where global brands like **Apple and Nike** released special edition products, donating a portion of the sales to the **Global Fund**.

South Korea's Role in Global Health AI

Q: What does HealthAI expect from South Korea?

Benn: *"South Korea is a global leader in AI and health AI. It has world-class companies and is actively investing in AI research. In particular, its diagnostic technology is among the best in the world.*

We are planning collaborations with South Korea based on these strengths. Additionally, we hope South Korea will play a role in supporting other countries to enhance their healthcare capabilities."

During his visit, Benn met with officials from the Ministry of Health and Welfare, the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety, the Korean Society of Artificial Intelligence in Medicine, private organizations, and lawmakers. He noted,

"Many Korean partners have shown strong interest and enthusiasm for health AI. Moving forward, cooperation between HealthAI and South Korea will only grow stronger."

As the interview concluded, Benn emphasized that **AI must be leveraged to bridge healthcare disparities**:

"Countries must develop the capacity to evaluate and utilize AI-based medical technologies. By doing so, we can create a future where more people have access to quality healthcare services. We look forward to South Korea taking a leading role in global medical innovation."

Reporter Chae Ye-bin, Better Future

Original article