

Alumni Voice Session at the DigiHealthDayS-2024*

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ABSTRACT

The Alumni Voice session during the DigiHealthDayS-2024 highlighted the importance of digital health literacy as well as the academic and professional trajectories of the Master of Digital Health graduates. Three brilliant alumni shared their personal and diverse experiences, offering insights that may shape students' perspectives on career development and industry challenges. The session concluded with a forward-looking dialogue about the future of healthcare.

KEYWORDS

Education, alumni, digital health

1. Introduction

Digital health advances are happening at an unprecedented scale and are poised to change the way healthcare is delivered. Training and education programs are fundamental for the future workforce to keep up with the speed of innovation, as well as to develop and use technologies while pondering their risks and limitations.

At the Deggendorf Institute of Technology (DIT), the Master's in Digital Health (MDH) has provided many students from different backgrounds with the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of emerging digital health technologies. Since the first graduating cohort in 2018, alumni have successfully transitioned into professional roles, contributing to the ongoing development of the digital health sector. The Alumni Voice session during the DigiHealthDayS-2024 aimed to bridge the gap between MDH students, graduates, and established professionals by:

1. Creating and fostering a space for dialogue that engages alumni and students as well as a space to share experiences, concerns, and achievements;
2. Encouraging students and alumni to engage in extension activities, such as working groups, mentoring activities, and communities of practice.

*DIALOGUE @ DigiHealth Alumni – Research, Education, Workforce. Hosts: Camila Tomikawa (HIMSS, Germany) & Oscar Blanco (DIT, Germany). Speakers – MDH Alumni: Mahsa Rouzkhataoui (Iran), Eugene Amponsah, (Ghana), Helana Lutfi (Germany).

2. Key Considerations

The Alumni Voice session at the DigiHealthDayS-2024 kicked off with an overview of its goals and a brief review of the Master's history. Since its beginning, the Master in Digital Health (MDH, formerly Master in Medical Informatics or MMI) has offered many students from different backgrounds to expand their knowledge and prepare for the future of healthcare. The original course syllabus was built to accommodate students with a computer sciences background as well as life sciences studies background. In 2021, the study program changed its syllabus and name to reflect the developments in the field, such as the growth of generative AI, privacy regulations, and cloud-based solutions.

As preparation for the session, alumni of the study program were polled and the results showed that after graduation, most of them stayed in Germany (80 %), taking on different roles such as clinical research associates (CRAs), medical quality specialists, PhD students, software developers, project managers, founders, and more. The top three industries are software development, consulting, and pharmaceuticals.

Beyond the academic and career trajectories of graduates, the session addressed the critical role of digital health literacy in contemporary society. Patients with low health literacy in general are more likely to visit an emergency room, have more hospital stays, have higher mortality rates, and are less likely to follow treatment plans [1]. With the rapid development and increasing adoption of new technologies in healthcare, it is pressing to transition from “traditional” health literacy into a version that encompasses digital health literacy.

After this initial section, three graduates were invited to share their individual experiences as MDH students during and after graduation. Their perspectives were varied, offering insights that may influence how students perceive themselves and their potential future career paths. The graduates contributed to a diverse representation and fostered a connection between the conference attendance.

The session concluded with a forward-looking discussion on the evolution of digital health, guided by the Global Strategy on Digital Health [2]. After considering the course developments and the students' testimonials, we proposed a step back to look at the bigger picture: how is the field evolving and describing how the future will look. The panelists explored key strategic priorities and shared insights on the expected future of the field, fostering an engaging dialogue among participants.

3. Conclusion

The Alumni Voice session during the DigiHealthDayS-2024 aimed to aid in bridging the gap between students, graduates, and established professionals through networking, project collaboration, mentorship, and community and belonging. The session highlighted the importance of digital health literacy as well as the academic and professional trajectories of the MDH graduates. Three brilliant alumni shared their diverse experiences, offering insights that may shape students' perspectives on career development and industry challenges. The session concluded with a forward-looking dialogue, encouraging participants to critically examine the field's evolution and the future directions of digital health.

References

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