

**Zi Konferenz**  
**Versorgungsforschung**  
13. und 14. September 2017  
in Berlin



**REGIONALE UNTERSCHIEDE IN DER GESUNDHEITSVERSORGUNG**  
**Aus den Regionen lernen – Ein Gewinn für's Ganze?**

**TRACKING REGIONAL VARIATION IN HEALTH CARE**  
**Learning from the regions – Benefit for all?**

**Grußwort vom 13.09.2017**

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A warm welcome in Berlin to the Health Services Research Conference 2017 titled Learning from the Regions – Benefit for all?

What is Zi?

It's the Central Research Institute for ambulatory care, a research foundation which is supported by the 17 Regional Associations of Statutory Health Insurance Physicians in Germany, and their Federal Association, all of which are responsible for managing universal access to ambulatory health care for patients under statutory health insurance

Why are we sponsoring this conference?

Statutory health insurance in Germany covers nearly 90% of the population. It is a health system based on the principles of universal access to state of the art health-care, and on financial solidarity to achieve equity in healthcare

Regional and small area variations in health care are a challenge to any healthcare system based on these principles and ever since John Wennberg discovered the

phenomenon in the early 1970's many have been analyzing it to find ways to reduce unwarranted variation.

As a result, in many countries we have now health atlases and reporting tools that make observable variation transparent to everyone. By the way, also Zi has been sponsoring such a health atlas on Germany ([www.versorgungsatlas.de](http://www.versorgungsatlas.de)) for more than 6 years now. Many of these atlases and reporting tools around us have evolved to complex instruments that can give physicians, hospitals and other healthcare providers in the regions detailed and often helpful feedback on aspects of care which could be improved.

The whole field is still evolving. In many countries the medical profession is beginning to see the need and the chances to be actively involved in the study of regional variation.

Because of this rich source of experience we are very glad and proud to have many international guests here today and tomorrow who will be able to share their insights with our German audience. Many of these, I am sure, will be exciting for our German colleagues and inspire new developments here in Germany.

Therefore I would like to thank all our international guests very much for joining us. We appreciate your input knowing that most of you have travelled far to come here. Let me emphasize that the international perspective is absolutely vital to our German discussion. Why? 2 reasons:

First, because it shows that our international guests are grappling with very similar problems in their respective countries, irrespective of the type of organization of the healthcare system.

What does this tell us? It shows that we do not necessarily need to look for new institutional arrangements. Rather by tackling variation directly, we may be able to improve the quality of care more significantly.

Second, we can learn from the experiences and the ingenuity of our colleagues abroad. We can see what worked effectively to reducing unwarranted variation. And we can think of ways to implement similar methods in Germany.

Together with the International Wennberg Collaboration and the London School of Economics we had a first international conference of this kind 2 years ago here in Berlin. The theme was: improving care by learning from regional variation. The first conference in 2015 was opened by the president of the German Medical Association and ever since it has become absolutely clear that the medical profession must get more involved in the process of studying and learning from variation.

Therefore I would like to thank the German Network of Healthcare Researchers and

the Association of the scientific medical colleges in Germany for partnering this year's conference. I think your partnership shows that the analysis of variation to improve Germany's health care system is becoming an integral part of health services research. Also, it has reached the professional bodies which develop and publish medical guidelines thereby shaping state-of-the-art medicine in Germany.

Why is this great news? Well, simply because healthcare variation is not only a challenge. It is also a great chance. It allows us to learn from examples of best practice. It shows what can be done by looking more closely at everyday processes of care without necessarily changing laws or institutions.

This conference should provide all of you with many insights, ideas, methods and experiences to improve on this pathway of change. In Germany we need to improve our analytic tools as well as our management tools in this field.

This is a long term process with great relevance for the health care system. We need to understand it as such, i.e. as a long term process. Therefore please regard this conference as part of a team building process. We will need a big team to have any effect in this field. Stay on, join us for dinner and meet as many colleagues in the field as possible. Form national and international partnerships. And if you thought this was good, hopefully, join in again for a potential third international conference in Berlin in 2019.