

JOHN LOTHERINGTON REPORTING FROM

Charité Entrepreneurship Summit for Healthcare

Held in Berlin in March 2010, the Charité Entrepreneurship Summit for Healthcare brought together some 400 people – scientists, medics and tech transfer experts alongside entrepreneurs, business angels, venture capitalists and patent lawyers, among others – from Europe and the US. A central goal for the Summit was to look for innovative ways of bridging the ‘valley of death’, that chasm between the inspiration in the lab and its arrival as medication or an appliance in use.

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The waning of creativity in Big Pharma, the cumbersome procedures of governments and traditional foundations, an organizational risk aversion quite separate from issues of patient safety – these

are some of the barriers to be overcome through much more fluid and dynamic relationships between science, medicine, business and finance.

Foundations need to be focused on facilitating those relationships as well as funding the research process. An example of innovative practice is provided by the Myelin Repair Foundation, established by Scott Johnson, a veteran leader of commercial start-ups in the US. A sufferer from MS himself, he places the focus firmly on speeding up creativity, proactively seeking out partnerships and projects to develop – rather than passively waiting for satisfactory grant applications to come in – and then seeing projects through every stage from initial research to commercial development.

A key change in the last generation is that people like Johnson don't think twice about crossing the profit/non-profit or public/private boundaries where the regulatory framework permits. For them it's the goal that matters, and reaching it with the greatest speed and efficiency. The distinction between entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship more generally is not a useful one, said Stephan Gutzeit of Stiftung Charité (pictured on the contents page), which organized the event in partnership with the US-based Kauffman Foundation. In this analysis, there is just an entrepreneurial spirit – and healthcare, and the philanthropy which supports it, needs more of it.

For more information www.charite-summit.de

BETSY BRILL REPORTING FROM

1st Pacific Northwest Global Donors conference

Pathways for Strategic Giving, held on 19 and 20 March in Seattle, Washington was the inaugural gathering of a new community of global donors, Pacific Northwest Global Donors. Over 180 donors attended, including representatives from the Bill and Melinda Gates, Channel, Seattle, Seattle International and Washington Women's Foundations, as well as from the World Affairs Council, giving circle members and individual donors in the Northwest.

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Fashioned after its sister organization, the Chicago Global Donors Network, the conference promised four key outcomes for its attendees: to provide information on many of today's most significant global issues; to increase confidence in global grantmaking; to identify

best practice in addressing the root causes of global poverty and fundamental human rights issues; and to link participants to a growing community of global philanthropists in the region.

Opening the conference, Kavita Ramdas of the Global Fund for Women emphasized the need for a collective vision for a more just world. The problems are not too huge to tackle, she argued, urging the need to ground funding decisions in the voices of those seeking support on the ground.

Topics ranged from building sustainable assets for the poor to gender and empowerment, access to education, sustainable agriculture and food security, disaster relief and recovery, conflict resolution, and peace and human security. Panels on giving practice covered

advocacy as a change strategy, how to make a site visit, working at the grassroots, monitoring and evaluation, and programme-related investing.

Closing the conference, Bill Gates, Sr asked: 'Why do I remain optimistic?' His answer: 'It's because knowledge is not a finite resource and neither is compassion.'

As many attendees remarked, global giving is somehow 'in the water here [in Seattle] – it's part of people's blood'. No doubt this conference is just the beginning for the rapidly evolving global donor community in the Pacific Northwest.

For more information Conference highlights and overview can be found at <http://globaldonors.wordpress.com>