Interview

A Medical Revolution

Dr. Michael Kaschke discusses the potential of molecular imaging

Dr. Michael Kaschke, Member of the Executive Board.

Dr. Michael Kaschke is the member of the Carl Zeiss AG Executive Board responsible for Medical Systems and Microscopy. In an interview, he talks about the perspectives of molecular imaging.

Which competencies in particular does Carl Zeiss bring to the alliance?

Imaging methods are among the most important competencies of Carl Zeiss, primarily in the Microscopy and Medical Systems Business Groups. These are supported by our central research & development department.

Is the Alliance also open to other partners? If yes, what additional competencies would you like to see from the new partners?

The five partners who launched the initiative would like to have additional partners: both from research and from industry. It is important for them to bring solutions and products from biotechnology and the life sciences.

Normally companies are in heated competition against each other. Don't you see any conflicts of interest?

No. Quite the opposite: The questions we are working on are so complex that a single company is not capable of finding a solution. Furthermore, the majority of the solutions and products offered by the five partners complement each other; they are not competing against each other. Therefore, imaging techniques, which Siemens and Carl Zeiss are developing, are particularly well-suited to the markers and contrasting agents manufactured by Bayer Schering, for example.

When the alliance was announced, the topic of discussion was not only the possibility of being able to diagnose diseases in good time. Being able to treat these diseases accordingly was a continuous subject. What is Carl Zeiss' role in this?

The objective of the initiative is not only to detect diseases early on but also to determine their causes. This will allow diseases to be treated before their outbreak. Let me explain: proteins are important molecule groups in animals that play a key role in the processes in cells necessary for life. Molecular imaging helps clarify which protein contributes to the onset of a disease. This makes it possible to really understand the cause of diseases. In turn, this information is vital for the development of medicines. I can even imagine that person-specific medicines can be used at a very early stage. In my opinion, molecular imaging is starting a revolution in medicine. Unfortunately, we still diagnose most diseases based on symptoms, i.e. once the disease has already broken out.

Thank you very much for this interview.

The questions were presented by Volker Lange and Silke Schmid