Lygature's Strategic Asset Sharing portfolio:

the value of public-private partnerships for delivering medical solutions to patients faster

An interview with:

Herman Verheij, PhD

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Program Manager at Lygature

"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much."

In the third in a series of interviews highlighting the added value of Lygature, we are focusing on our Strategic Asset Sharing portfolio. Senior Program Manager Herman Verheij shares his vision for the portfolio and explains what the role of Lygature is in making this vision a reality.

What are the challenges and uncharted territories in the Strategic Asset Sharing portfolio?

The Strategic Asset Sharing portfolio is a sort of "playground" of all Lygature portfolios. We will continue working in fields where we already have a strong presence – such as mobile health (m-Health) – the use of mobile devices for sharing real time health data between patients and health practitioners, and the screening and repurposing of compounds.

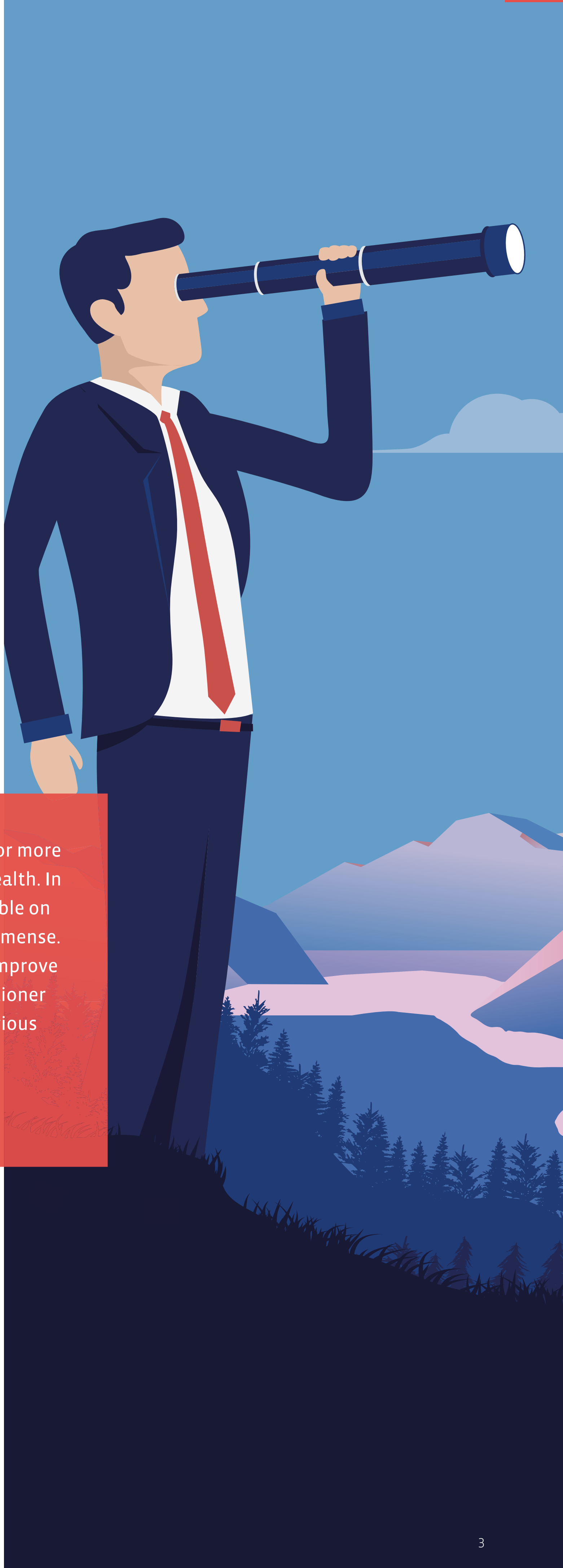
Next to that, we seek to explore innovative areas, like e.g. single-cell sequencing , for example in the PERSIST-SEQ project where single-cell sequencing is used to explore therapeutic resistance in cancer. This can be challenging because sometimes we do not have a lot of expertise yet to easily "jump" into these new fields. We thus will have to learn a lot of things "on the go", but we have shown to be adaptable and quick learners, so I am very positive about this prospect. Moreover, in the past we have managed to establish ourselves quickly in new areas such as m-Health and Technology Validation.

Hence, we consider many fields as uncharted territories which we would like to be active in. That is why we are excited about the new EU public-private partnership funding for innovative health research - the Innovative Health Initiative (IHI) which started in June.

What is your vision for the portfolio?

In the next few years we will aim to further grow our two biggest sub-portfolios – m-Health or Remote Monitoring Technologies (RMT) and Screening & Repurposing. Moreover, we will seek to branch out as much as possible into new fields such as cancer research or the building of platforms for health data sharing.

The abovementioned IHI will be a useful vehicle for the latter. In IHI calls one is required to partner up with multiple industrial partners, not only from the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA) like in the past, but also with (Med)Tech (where medical technology is used for diagnostics and therapeutic solutions for patients) companies that are in alliances like MedTech Europe and COCIR. These calls offer us exciting new opportunities, since organizations like Lygature are well-positioned to act as independent intermediaries between parties from different sectors.



incredible pace, with over 1 billion people wearing one or more devices that monitor important parameters linked to health. In fact, over 50,000 healthcare and medical apps are available on mobile phones and pads. The potential of this field is immense. Monitoring patients from a distance can measure and improve intervention effectiveness, and diminish general practitioner and hospital visits. These are only a few of the more obvious upsides of this development.

Unfortunately, at this moment only a small amount of the data generated by these RMTs is validated. Hence, more research projects are needed that seek to improve data validation, because regulators and payers need to trust the data gathered from these apps and devices. This is an indispensable step in order to fully unlock the potential of the m-Health field.

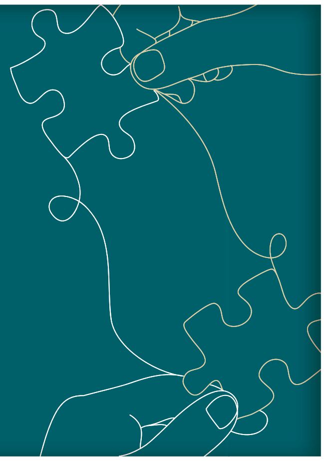
Who are the key players in realizing this vision?

Key players here are any institutions and companies active in these fields – academics, small and medium-sized enterprises, industrial partners, patients, payers, regulators and MedTech companies. All of these have different needs as reflected in their involvement in the innovative research projects which Lygature manages. We have found that an independent player like Lygature can help them to better work together, while ensuring that their individual interests are protected.

Another factor to consider is that the IHI requires industry to contribute at least 45% of the project budgets. Apart from their financial contribution, industrial partners are also needed because they provide knowledge on how to bridge the gap between innovations and real solutions for patients. Evidently, academic institutions are also necessary as partners in such projects, since they provide the required know-how that should be developed further.

What is Lygature's role in this?

One of Lygature's strengths is bringing together and managing public-private research consortia. Over a period of 15 years, we have built up a wealth of experience in managing both small and large public-private consortia. Next to Program Management, we also (co-) lead the work on Communication, Regulatory interactions, Data management and the interactions with patients or other stakeholders.



How will patients benefit from innovative public-private collaborations in the future?

Effective collaborations between academia, industry and the multitude of various stakeholders we see today in public-private consortia will yield solutions for patients that will reach the market much quicker than they would without these collaborations.

There are many great ideas lying around with many non-industrial stakeholders which never get developed any further because the know-how to do so is simply not present. This is not surprising - it isn't the job of these stakeholders to bring health innovations to patients - that is precisely what industry is good at.

The ultimate goal of public-private collaborations - to improve the chances of innovations to reach the market and the patient, has taken root in the past 20 years. The fields of Drug and Diagnostics Development are swiftly moving in this direction.

How will your vision become available to and benefit society in general?

Developments in m-Health, for instance, have already reached society. However, at this moment they the generated data is not validated enough for use by general practitioners and clinicians, or in hospitals. This final step (validation) still needs to be taken in order for patients to directly benefit from these new developments. With our large experience in this field, we can help consortia to progress these innovations for actual use in society.

My second biggest sub-portfolio is in the field of Screening and Repurposing. Both of these processes increase the speed at which new drugs can be developed and brought to the market. The first (screening) helps people to speed up the discovery of new drugs, which obviously benefits society in the long run. The second (repurposing) looks at existing active substances (drugs or otherwise) and investigates the possibilities to use them in new fields. Once such an option has been discovered, it can be moved to the patient much faster than it could traditionally. This is the case because most hurdles, for instance - regulatory approval to bring the drug to the market, have already been overcome with such substances.

What are you doing to make this vision a reality?

Right now, together with my teams, I'm managing 8 European projects, among which are the Lygature Strategic Assets Sharing Portfolio of projects. In the coming years, I hope to grow this portfolio further, and increase Lygature's visibility in Europe. I would like to see Lygature positioned as the "go-to" partner for managing and adding value to complex public-private research consortia in the various health and MedTech fields

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Ideally, what would the Strategic Asset Sharing portfolio look like in 2025-2030?

The portfolio would include various IHI projects. These are really aimed at bringing innovations to the patients who need them and society in general. This is precisely Lygature's bottom line: to deliver breakthrough innovations in medical technology and drug development which address unmet medical needs.

Ideally, I would like to see the biggest two sub-portfolios – m-Health and Screening and Repurposing, grow a bit larger. Next to that, it would also be great if we would have ventured into new areas and start building expertise there, like we have recently done in the fields of new technologies in cancer and dementia research.

What inspires you to pursue these goals?

What inspires me most is seeing that patients really benefit from our work – once projects move from the discovery and development phase to implementing innovations for patients, thus improving their lives. This really gives me a sense of accomplishment!

Portfolio
Strategic asset sharing

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