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IBM has announced plans to launch its first Watson Health European Center of Excellence in Milan near the Human Technopole Italy 2040 research campus, supporting the government of Italy's initiative to establish an international hub for the advancement of genomics, big data, aging, and nutrition.

The Center is part of a long-term collaboration between IBM and the government of Italy. IBM plans to invest up to $150 million (Ã¢â??Â¬135 million) over the next several years and bring together Watson Health data scientists, engineers, researchers and designers to develop a new generation of data-driven healthcare applications and solutions.

Further, the formation of the Center is intended to encourage the development of a pan-European ecosystem for healthcare reform, research, and health-tech start-ups. IBM data scientists, engineers and programmers are expected to work in collaboration with organizations across Europe to create a new class of cloud-based connected solutions at the intersection of cognitive computing, life sciences and healthcare. The Center is expected to provide access to resources and technology designed to help accelerate research into new treatment options, promote personalized medicine, and encourage discoveries aimed at improving overall public health management while advancing sustainable health systems.

"Italy is important to IBM - not only because of the creativity, skills and talent of the country's workforce, but also because of the Government's efforts to digitize Italy's economy," said Mr Erich Clementi, senior vice president, IBM Europe. "That is why we are excited to announce our new Watson Health European Center of Excellence near Milan, which will support the Italian Government's healthcare reform and research agenda by bringing together Watson developers and IBM Research scientists to apply remarkable cognitive computing capabilities to modern healthcare problems."

The plans for the first European Center of Excellence underscore IBM's continued investment in Watson Health, a global business unit founded in 2015. Watson Health brings the advanced cognitive computing capabilities of IBM Watson to doctors and other healthcare professionals.

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IBM anticipates that the Center will tap into the Watson Health Cloud and other offerings, which are designed to help enable individualized insights and a more complete picture of the many factors that can affect people's health. The Watson Health cloud platform allows this information to be anonymized, shared, and combined with an aggregated view of other health data to, for example, improve the ability of doctors and medical researchers to identify unexpected new drug targets or enable doctors to personalize treatment options for cancer patients.

"Healthcare is undergoing tremendous change, driven by data. The volume and variation of health data is growing exponentially with each passing day and our ability to monitor new measurements of health - such as social data and weather data - are making global health an even more complex equation to solve," said Ms Deborah DiSanzo, general manager for IBM Watson Health. "This new era in health will not be achieved through solitary efforts. It will require the work of countless experts together in an ecosystem where ideas are easily shared to improve and save lives around the world."

The Watson Health European Center of Excellence builds on IBM's recent investments in Italy and across Europe, including a new IBM Cloud data center in Milan, hiring young Italian workers while strengthening partnerships with key universities and start-ups, and the opening of the Watson IoT Global Headquarters in Munich, Germany.

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