

CONFERENCE REPORT

Healthcare in Transition: A Review of the 18th dggoe Annual Conference in Wuppertal

Wuppertal, March 2026

On 9 and 10 March 2026, the University of Wuppertal hosted the 18th Annual Conference of the German Society for Health Economics (dggoe), organised by Prof. Dr. Juliane Koeberlein-Neu. Around 350 participants from research, practice, and policy came together under the theme "Healthcare in Transition".

The opening keynote was delivered by Prof. Jeffrey Braithwaite (Macquarie University, Sydney), who addressed international health reform processes. Drawing on international health care data, Braithwaite presented a sobering picture: quality gaps, wasted resources, and avoidable patient harm are not exceptions in health systems around the world, but systemic realities. His central argument was that health systems are complex adaptive systems, not linear pipelines, and that reforms which fail to acknowledge this will inevitably fall short. In a subsequent workshop, he explored these ideas further with a focus on what it means for a health system to become both climate-aware and capable of continuous learning.

The scientific programme covered a wide thematic range. Sessions addressed the effects of nursing budgets on staffing and quality of care, structural inequalities in access to specialist appointments, and new opportunities for health services research through expanded data access. A study documenting substantial differences in waiting times between statutory and private health insurance patients when booking appointments through digital platforms attracted considerable attention. Further sessions examined the efficiency of inpatient long-term care and whether the menopause represents an underestimated gap in health care provision.

The second keynote was delivered by Prof. Angela Bate (Northumbria University, Newcastle), who presented the DREEM project: Developing Realist Economic Evaluation Methodology. Her approach integrates realist research with health economic methodology, asking not only whether interventions work, but why and how they produce their effects. In doing so, it moves beyond reimbursement questions and towards methods that are better aligned with real-world decision-making in health systems.

The scientific programme concluded with a Science Slam, in which four early-career researchers presented their work in creative and accessible formats. For the first time, the entire conference was accompanied by a live graphic recording: artist Lorna Schuette captured key discussions and insights in striking visual summaries, which were presented

during the closing plenary. The conference also made room for informal exchange: on Monday evening, participants gathered at the historic Stadthalle Wuppertal for the conference dinner, accompanied by the Stomping Sugar Group, where the dggoe Science Prize 2025 was awarded.

In the closing plenary, Congress President Prof. Dr. Juliane Koeberlein-Neu passed the baton to Prof. Dr. Lars Schwettmann, who will organise the 19th dggoe Annual Conference on 16 and 17 March 2027 at the Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg. The theme: "Crossing Boundaries".

The dggoe extends its warm thanks to the University of Wuppertal, all sponsors and supporters, and the entire organising team. Keynote slides and graphic recordings are available on the dggoe website.

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