

Big data, big opportunities

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Dr. Steven Udvarhelyi, president and CEO of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana, delivers the keynote presentation during the 38th annual Tulane Business Forum. (Photo by Sabree Hill)

What does your credit rating say about your potential health risks? As it turns out, quite a lot.

“The financial status and retail purchasing behaviors of our members turn out to be a very strong predictor of how they’re going to behave,” said Dr. Steven Udvarhelyi. “They’re going to take their retail purchasing behavior and apply it to health care, and we can predict their health events using that.”

Udvarhelyi, president and CEO of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana, delivered the keynote luncheon presentation at the 38th annual Tulane Business Forum, which took place on Friday (Sept. 22) at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center. With the theme “Big Ideas, Big Data,” this year’s forum focused on organizations that are using data in bold and innovative ways.

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Udvarhelyi said Blue Cross is increasingly shifting its emphasis to behavior change, using data-driven insights to improve the healthcare decisions of its 1.5 million members in Louisiana. For example, Udvarhelyi said Blue Cross can predict the likelihood that a member will have kidney disease using technologies similar to those used by Google when it predicts your search queries. Blue Cross can then incentivize both the member and the physician to seek early treatment.

“We need to pay for value and outcomes rather than just the number of things that are done,” Udvarhelyi said. “And we need to enable patients, physicians and other clinicians with actionable information.”

In addition to Udvarhelyi, the forum included presentations from Capital One Senior Vice President Michael Eason, confirmation.com President Brian Fox, University Medical Center CEO Bill Masterton and KPMG Managing Director Garth Roark as well as a panel discussion on doing business in Cuba.

“Data analytics is radically altering how businesses operate and is, without question, an area of rapidly increasing student interest,” said Freeman School Dean Ira Solomon. “I thought this year’s speakers did an outstanding job explaining how the intelligent use of data is transforming their jobs and driving decision making within their organizations.”