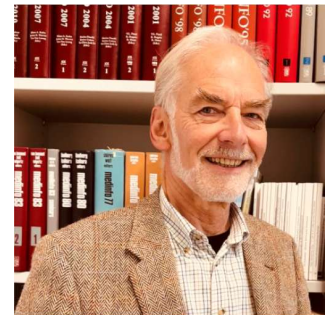


Otto Rienhoff, MD PhD, Professor Emeritus of Medical Informatics

Overview: Stemming from a German-American family, his career spans more than five decades of various professional roles, academic leadership, pioneering research in Medical Informatics, and health technology. He had many advisory and chair roles at national and international levels. Across his appointments at the Medical Schools in Hanover, Marburg, and Göttingen, he helped establish and shape Medical Informatics as an independent scientific discipline.



Academic Education & Early Career

Otto Rienhoff was born on November 9, 1949, in Dortmund, Germany. His family name stems from a middle ages farm in the village Soest-Meiningsen. After completing his medical studies at the University of Münster - which included clinical clerkships at the Mayo Clinic and Johns Hopkins Hospital in the United States - he passed the State Medical Examination and earned his medical doctorate (PhD equivalent) in 1973 with a doctoral thesis focused on computerized ECG diagnostics. He subsequently completed one year of medical internship in pediatrics, surgery, and cardiology at Hannover Medical School (MHH). In 1975–1976, he fulfilled his military medical service as Brigade Physician and Director of the Medical Center in Nienburg, a 40-bed facility with six medical officers. Later he became medical colonel (MC) in the Reserve at the Federal Ministry of Defence (BMVg), writing a strategic study on IT development in the military medical service.

Faculty Appointments & Department Leadership

Between 1975 and 1984, Otto Rienhoff advanced his academic and clinical career at MHH's Institute of Medical Informatics under the mentorship of Prof. P.L. Reichertz. He achieved board certification in Medical Informatics and was appointed C2 Associate Professor in 1982. During this period, he also established the degree curriculum in 'Bioscientific Documentation' at the Hanover University of Applied Sciences and served from 1980 to 1990 as the inaugural Data Protection Officer for the Association of Statutory Health Insurance Physicians of Lower Saxony (KVN). In 1983–1984, he expanded his international collaborative network as a visiting scientist and 'Clause 18 Visitor' at Groote Schuur Hospital and the University of Cape Town, maintaining these ties through regular guest lectureships in subsequent years.

In 1985, Otto Rienhoff accepted a call to become C4 Full Professor and Founding Director of the newly established Department of Medical Informatics at the University of Marburg. There, he directed clinical IT, established the Institute Center for Medical Biometry and Informatics, and served on the hospital executive board and university senate, while also contributing to the AWMF medical licensing reform and teaching in Victoria, Canada. In 1995, he transitioned to the University of Göttingen as C4 Full Professor and Director of the Department of Medical Informatics, leading the department until 2019. In Göttingen, he spearheaded the migration of legacy hospital information systems to modern commercial platforms, directed the Medical Computing Center, and co-founded the Competence Center for Medical Technology, Biotechnology and Metrology. Starting in 2000, he also initiated the Bachelor and Master programs in 'Medical Informatics – Health Information Officer', which received international accreditation by the International Medical Informatics Association (IMIA) in 2013 and 2017.

Research Fields, Strategic Consulting & Policy Advisory Roles

Otto Rienhoff's research focus has centered on data management for medical research, clinical decision support systems, health service information technology, and health data science. He has authored and edited numerous scientific papers, specialized reference books, and book series. Alongside his research, he has been a prominent advisor to health ministries, hospitals, and medical technology enterprises. Notably, he served in the 1980ies as a strategic consultant to Prof. U. Reinhardt, CIO of Siemens Medical, and Surgeon General G. Desch, Chief Medical Officer of the German Armed Forces. On a national policy level, he served as first Scientific Coordinator of the federal 'bIT4health' advisory board for the Ministry of Health, chaired the Coordination Council of the Telematics Platform for Medical Research Networks (TMF), and contributed to DFG commissions on IT infrastructure at German universities for many years. In this role he has been participating in several international study tours analyzing the digital impact on top-resear He was chosen as first chairperson of the newly founded national Council for Scientific Information Infrastructures (RFII) 2014-2018, laying the strategic groundwork for Germany's National Research Data Infrastructure (NFDI).

Global Leadership, Societal Engagement & Honors

Internationally recognized for his global advocacy, Otto Rienhoff served as President of the German Society for Medical Informatics, Biometry and Epidemiology (GMDS) from 1993 to 1995, orchestrating its successful reorganization following German reunification. From 1995 to 1998, he served as President of the International Medical Informatics Association (IMIA). A dedicated champion of informatics in developing nations, he founded IMIA Working Group 9 and coordinated a global philanthropic campaign that distributed more than 2,000 specialized textbooks to remote colleagues worldwide. In addition, he served as an expert advisor to the World Health Organization (WHO) with field visits in the Western Pacific, Latin America, and the Caribbean, and contributed to the High-Performance Computing and Communication (HPCC) Program and Source Selection Advisory Group of the US National Library of Medicine under Prof. D.A.B. Lindberg.

His lifelong contributions have been recognized with an Honorary Fellowship of the International Medical Informatics Association (IMIA), an International Fellowship of the American Medical Informatics Association (AMIA), membership in the International Academy of Health Sciences Informatics (IAHSI), and an Honorary Membership of GMDS (2025).

Current Mandates & Ongoing Activities

Today, Otto Rienhoff remains actively engaged in academic development and digital health policy. He supports the Dean and Executive Board Chairman (Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Brück) of the University Medical Center Göttingen (UMG) on the digital transformation and IT strategies for future healthcare systems. Furthermore, since 2023, he chairs the International Advisory Board of the Faculty of Medicine at Tbilisi State University in Georgia, fostering bilateral academic cooperation, curriculum enhancement, and research collaboration.

October 2026