



NAVIGATING THE FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE

Almost like a living organism, the healthcare industry is constantly adapting to survive and thrive in unprecedented circumstances. In the last 20 months, healthcare services underwent an unparalleled transformation to withstand the unforeseen global pandemic and continues to do so with the help of technological advancement. With agility and digitalization weaved into its fabric, the future of healthcare is already here. It is driven by data interoperability and digital technology.

The pandemic has accelerated the adoption of digital channels for uninterrupted care delivery. However, Health Insurance (payer) organizations, providers and clinical staff, researchers and employees, and the

patients have their own perspective of technology adoption by the industry. On their journey to digitalization, healthcare and life sciences enterprises are met with many hurdles. Onboarding employees, change management, trust with data privacy, apprehensions about relying on technology for care delivery are some of the frequently discussed in context of digitalization in the healthcare ecosystem.

The response to these hurdles is what builds organizations of the future. As Malcolm X famously said, *"The future belongs to those who prepare for it today."*

HCLS Marketing organized the second Healthcare and Life Sciences industry client executive conclave, steered by the theme

'Digital Platforms – the road ahead for Healthcare and Pharma ecosystem'. The virtual panel discussion was led by Roshan Shetty, Head of Life Sciences, Insurance, and Healthcare, Infosys, and was supported by a senior analyst. The eminent speakers at the event were Alan Tong, VP and Chief Digital Officer, Molina Healthcare; Fariba Alim-Marvasti, Chief Information Officer, Aetna International; Omar el Khamlichi, Chief Technology Officer, Quin and a prominent leader from Life Sciences.

The event focused on understanding the perspectives and needs of CXOs in the healthcare ecosystem. The panel discussed a multitude of points from their perspective around the future of healthcare.

Evolution of the Virtual

During the pandemic, continuing healthcare via digital channels became essential to consult, diagnose and treat illnesses. The pharmaceutical industry had to follow a similar path of urgency to continue research, uninterrupted. Virtual clinical trials were not widely adopted in the pharmaceutical ecosystem until the Covid-19 pandemic affected the global population. But, a quick shift in the mindset of sponsors, clinicians, and even patients helped conduct research partially or completely remote.

Drug development organizations went the extra mile when the unprecedented health crisis began to facilitate remote working for their researchers and clinical staff. Stakeholders in pharma and clinical research enterprises were quick to respond and adapt to remote operating.

The digital transformation of the pharmaceutical industry is not limited to facilitating decentralized or virtual clinical trials. Technological advancements in areas of artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), advanced data analytics, etc.,

are helping modernize the entire process of drug development. Remote monitoring, evaluating endpoints, even logistics and supply chain management is powered by digital technologies.

With a better understanding of patients in their everyday environment, researchers are advancing in personalizing clinical trials. The pharma industry sees opportunities in the evolving remote and hybrid modes of conducting clinical research. *"Virtual engagement is not only relevant for clinical trials but also gives us new insights, which helps adopt a patient-centric trial approach. Personalized trials are evolving into an interesting trend in pharmaceutical research," the senior analyst explained.*

Trust is Empowering

The surge in popularity of telehealth services, remote and hybrid clinical trials is expected to continue at scale. Telehealth connected the patients with their providers, but it also highlighted the importance of the patient-provider relationship. We, as humans, see more value in the interaction with healthcare

providers and clinical staff who we know and trust. Trust has been a strong influencer when it comes to making healthcare related decisions and is at risk in recent times.

Data can be the backbone to rebuild customer and employee confidence. Data on a patient's experience – what they feel, think, and say - can be relevant, and insightful for organizations to consider in their product development and service delivery. This holds true for employee experience and ascertains that the stakeholders in Healthcare Organizations (HCOs) and big pharma listens to and understands them.

Fariba Alim-Marvasti, Aetna International, stated, "Trust is a huge factor in delivering the right experience to the constituent or customer. Healthcare is extremely complex. From a payer point of view, we need to create much simpler transactions for our members and providers and enable that trust. I think everybody at this virtual panel discussion has talked about the need to strengthen capabilities around not only the technology but the data behind it to earn the customer's trust."

Data-driven organizations tend to create more visibility and transparency in their workflows. This is exemplified by the increasing trust in technology disruptors worldwide. Workflow transparency becomes possible with data exchange between systems and interoperability. Legacy software is disparate and cannot deliver the much-needed connectivity between devices and data across platforms. Intelligent digital platforms are capable of integrating information from different touchpoints. Digitalized data can turn siloed data into useful enterprise data adding visibility to everyday operations in the healthcare ecosystem. Creating awareness around patient information, accessible billing information or even appointment tracking can empower the patient.

Understanding the customers and addressing their apprehensions backed by robust data protection and transparency can go a long way for any HCO that is or aims to become consumer-centric.

AI for Better Outcomes and Reduced Burnout

Between the job losses during lockdowns and the acute increase in demand of healthcare workers due to the resurging Covid-19 infections, healthcare providers are overworked. Doctors, clinicians, researchers, and other healthcare workers are experiencing burnout.

To combat the sky-high costs of operations, healthcare CIOs globally are investing in cutting-edge technology like AI. Furthermore, governing bodies like the MHRA, FDA, and others are investing in AI and ML to provide better quality care with value-based outcomes.

AI cuts down costs and saves time by automating simple manual tasks, reduces human error in documenting, billing, medical coding, etc. Technology speeds up tasks with improved efficacy so the staff can spend more time on patient care and not on paperwork. With predictive data analytics organizations can accurately plan and deploy staff based on historical data. AI, ML, data analytics, and cloud technology teamed up can digest massive

raw data to produce actionable insights along with visibility in the process, every step of the way, to all the stakeholders involved. AI can understand complex policies and procedural changes in real-time thus keeping the consumer informed of the possible impact on their healthcare and financial implications.

Even though met with some pushback from the medical community, AI is also fortifying the decision-making ability of healthcare providers while focusing on better outcomes for the patient. Many healthcare organizations have implemented AI and ML tools for the purposes of patient care, few have been able to successfully apply them to decision making at the highest level. The technology can also help augment diagnostic capabilities, especially during provider shortage. AI helps driving system-wide outcome improvement for the entire healthcare and life sciences ecosystem.

Omar el Khamlichi, Quin, believes that we have just started seeing the benefits of AI in healthcare. "Scheduling and capacity management with smart analysis of patient volume in different time zones, places, for a particular specialty area is only one example of where technology can help ease the pressure on GPs and hospital employees. In addition, AI could support an objective diagnostic process, resulting in optimized health outcomes. For example, AI could support the specialist in analyzing MRI scans. However, there are also a lot of concerns in terms of trust and safety regarding experimental technology. I'm really looking forward to explore the added value of these new technologies, while complying with the highest standards for Data Privacy and Security," he explained.

Organizations are keen on leveraging AI decision making to achieve health equity, especially in places with limited or no access to care.

The Digital Expectations

Primary and expert healthcare have moved beyond hospital walls. Digital channels of interaction are now unavoidable to continue access to healthcare. Healthcare and life sciences organizations are now

faced with the immediate challenge of optimizing the patient experience at the digital touchpoints of their care experience. Across phases of the patient's healthcare journey, effective engagement is paramount to retain the customer.

Alan Tong, Molina Healthcare recounted his own experience of successfully deploying digital platforms, "Before adopting a digital platform or going through transformation, I like to map the journey of patients and members. Journey mapping rewards with tons of insights. Digital capability expansions and transformations fail without understanding the customers' experience points. Modeling the siloed data to analyze and understand is very critical to deploy a better enterprise strategy in reaching the customers, drive innovation, optimize use of resources and ultimately have a successful platform adoption."

Innovative digital platforms can ingest data from a customer's healthcare journey and research to deliver a personalized experience. Value-driven and personalized care like pre-emptive testing and wellness programs not only help acquire customers but also engage and retain them. Easy access to information, transparent workflows, and visible accountability help engage customers in the process. Intelligent digital platforms are capable of creating an integrated and free flow of information between otherwise siloed healthcare entities. Providers and other healthcare workers find value and connect with the complete ecosystem through the platform.

Digital platforms can be successfully adopted by organizations by frictionless onboarding, effective change and culture management. Employees and patients will continue to experience a disconnect in their interaction if they don't see the advantages of a digital platform as compared to a legacy IT solution in place. Delivering value in terms of saved time, manual labor, better outcomes, improved engagement, and agility will help address any apprehensions of the enterprise stakeholders.

Conclusion

The path ahead for the healthcare ecosystem will rely more on data and personalization backed by technology and innovation. Intelligent platforms that are patient-centric can heighten data adoption to customize and optimize patient journeys across various phases, at scale. Modular platforms that can be deconstructed and scaled according to changing needs like Lego blocks can help achieve operational efficacy and address any apprehensions of sunken investments.

Providing consistent and enhanced omnichannel experiences will set apart the leaders in the industry. Enhanced digital experience is also relevant for avoiding

employee burnout and better workforce efficiency. Driving engagement among patients and employees alike with the help of reliable data, AI, ML, and advanced analytics in real-time adds the much-needed transparency; thereby earning patients' trust. This means better outcomes for the HCOs.

Healthcare organizations succeeding in the new paradigm are the ones that are digitally optimized. Strategizing the business models and workflows to deliver patient-centric healthcare while innovating with the backing of intelligent technological platforms are their winning ingredients.



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