



AI Integration Can Greatly Improve the Patient/Pharmacist Experience

(Source: An article by David Pope, PharmD, and Jeff Carmichael for Drug Store News)

There is no denying that artificial intelligence (AI) will transform our experiences – from autocorrect and digital assistants to autonomous cars, it is becoming an ever-present aspect of daily life.

How will AI affect pharmacy? This is the question in the minds of pharmacists and healthcare professionals. Perhaps the bigger question is will pharmacists become obsolete?

The answer is a resounding no. Despite advancements in AI, the demand for pharmacists is expected to remain high due to the aging population, healthcare provider shortages and the evolving role of pharmacy as the front door to healthcare and patient interaction. There will always be a role for human interaction and patient trust making pharmacists irreplaceable.

With this in mind, AI can help smooth the pharmacist/patient relationship and help pharmacists focus time and energy on high-value healthcare services, the reason people chose to become pharmacists in the first place.

A look at a typical interaction and how AI is on the cusp of improving the experience—at each point in the process—shows an overall improvement of the cycle by facilitating the following:

- Automating the collection of patient information for record-keeping and billing purposes before the visit.
- Enhancing the patient/pharmacist dialogue during the appointment
- Reducing unexpected out-of-pocket expenses and billing errors after the visit.
- Streamline ongoing revenue cycle management (RCM) for pharmacies.

For patients, visiting the local pharmacy should be simple. Make an appointment, upload a photo of the insurance card and meet with the pharmacist. Unfortunately, this is generally not the case.

Instead, just completing the paperwork for a first-time patient visit can take an inordinate amount of time. The patient is typically asked to enter insurance information and history manually on multiple forms all attached to a clipboard. It can take up to 20 minutes or more for someone who may be managing multiple chronic conditions or has a complicated medical history. These same forms are then returned to the pharmacist who takes additional time to enter the information into their system, work through patient eligibility determination, benefit coverage and obtain estimated out-of-pocket costs that consider deductibles, co-insurance and co-pays; a significant amount of time that few have to devote to such processes. How can AI streamline this process?

In the future, AI will enhance the front-end patient experience by automating data collection and communication, reducing

(continued on page 2)

In Brief...

♦ **McKesson Corporation** has completed the acquisition of a controlling interest in **Community Oncology Revitalization Enterprise (CORE) Ventures**, a business and administrative services organization. McKesson said the deal advances community-based oncology care and enables McKesson to continue to accelerate clinical development, improve patient outcomes and expand access to quality cancer care in local communities.

♦ **Merck KGaA** announced the acquisition of **SpringWorks Therapeutics** for an equity value of US\$3.9 billion. The deal enhances Merck KGaA's presence in the U.S. and bolsters its oncology portfolio. SpringWorks brings with it two approved drugs and several rare disease pipeline candidates.

♦ As part of its 75th Anniversary, **Droguería del Sud** officially inaugurated its new Distribution Center in Estación Juárez Celman, Córdoba. With an investment of US\$20 million, the new 16,000 m² facility marks a strategic leap in logistics innovation, operational efficiency, and nationwide expansion. Equipped with state-of-the-art technology, the new center triples the capacity of the previous one, enables

(continued on page 2)

Healthcare Leaders Rethinking Short-term Strategy Amid Market and Policy Volatility

(Source: An article by Heather Landi for FiercePharma)

C-Suite executives are trying to keep pace with the rapid changes in the U.S. economic and regulatory policies in the first four months of the second Trump administration.

Among the 700 business executives surveyed across six industries, nearly half (48%) of business executives rank economic policy among the top three factors driving strategic change over the next one or two years, according to a new PwC Pulse survey published in May.

For healthcare executives, persistent policy and market volatility is a bigger concern, with six out of ten rethinking short-term business strategies due to economic policies.

Leaders of healthcare organizations also cited a number of other factors affecting short-term strategic changes. On the list is artificial intelligence and data regulations (56%), U.S. trade policy (44%), and U.S. federal government spending and budget

(continued on page 2)

SAVE THE DATE!
IFPW'S 2026 CEO ROUNDTABLE
will be held April 15th & 16th
at the Business Roundtable
in Washington D.C.

Watch for more information on event schedule and hotel accommodations in the coming months.

AI Integration (cont'd.)...

paperwork and confusion. At the same time, AI will significantly lower pharmacy costs by reducing administrative burdens while improving efficiency.

In our complication healthcare system, every insurance card is different, each possessing a unique conundrum for healthcare providers. The lack of standardization in insurance cards, with varying terminology and formats, creates an additional step of complexity in healthcare encounters. Leveraging insurance card processing and technologies like optical character recognition, natural language processing and machine learning is expected to bring much-needed sanity to the inefficiencies and duplication in today's system. By streamlining healthcare processes, eliminating repetitive paperwork and speeding up additional administrative tasks, AI can facilitate the visit process for both patient and pharmacist.

Additionally, AI can alert a pharmacist to items needing review, thereby potentially reducing medication errors that might otherwise be overlooked, while providing data insights. While its role in clinical decision-making is still evolving, AI can provide an additional safety net for pharmacists and their teams. This will significantly reduce errors, improve care and increase trust between the pharmacist and patient.

Another positive aspect of AI is expected improvement in patient outcomes by optimizing follow-up care and providing personalized assistance to both patients and pharmacists.

AI can be a useful tool to limit unexpected surprises as well, such as billing errors. By reviewing payment history and related specific source data, AI can calculate precise payment information, thus giving the patient the ability to plan for associated costs without any unexpected additional financial burden.

It is no secret that patients are relying more and more on their local pharmacists for their healthcare. The surge in visits and the shifts in types of care patients seek from their local pharmacy has elevated the pharmacists' status as a preferred venue of care. On an ongoing basis, reducing claim denials presents pharmacies with a major opportunity for enhancing reimbursement through simplifying insurance claim processes, improving accuracy and supporting compliance.

If done in an appropriate manner, AI will be a seamless support. Neither patients nor pharmacists will even realize AI is in the background since it will be integrated into the patient/pharmacist experience. This transformation of AI-driven pharmacy will set a new industry standard.

Healthcare Leaders (cont'd.)...

policy (37%). Healthcare c-suite leaders seem less concerned about corporate tax policy, cited by 34% of respondents as a factor driving short-term strategic changes, as well as the U.S. antitrust and competition environment (24%), climate policy (22%) and U.S. immigration policy (22%).

The survey offers a real-time glimpse at how healthcare leaders are adapting to recent shifts, according to PwC.

Other top-of-mind considerations for executives are cyber threats, economic uncertainty and a labor crunch as they navigate the current volatility in today's business environment. Macroeconomic uncertainty was cited as another top-tier risk,

with 85% of healthcare respondents flagging it as a moderate or serious risk – the highest across all industries – along with margin pressure affecting earnings.

In the face of these challenges, healthcare executives are making a range of operational adjustments, according to the survey findings. These adjustments include revising financial forecasts and budgets, implementing cost reductions, assessing tariff impacts and renegotiating supplier prices. In some cases, healthcare companies are shoring manufacturing operations.

According to the survey results across all industries, business leaders are starting lay the foundation for future opportunities. They are looking at cost reductions, adjusting financial forecasts and budgets, and diversifying suppliers.

The current environment may require a "two-speed" approach, analysts noted, with executives making rapid tactical moves in the short-term to manage volatility while also planning coordinated long-term strategies to compete more effectively in the future.

(For survey details, please visit <https://www.pwc.com/us/en/library/pulse-survey/business-outlook-100-days.html>.)

In Brief (cont.)

the processing of up to four million units per month, and significantly improves response and delivery times in the provinces of Córdoba, Santa Fe, Tucumán, Salta, Jujuy, La Rioja, Catamarca, and Santiago del Estero. "This new center allows us to grow, reach our clients faster and with a wider range of products, and continue building an increasingly robust and nationwide logistics network. Above all, it reflects our commitment to quality, innovation, and the personalized service that sets us apart throughout the country," said *Eric Pérez Ochoteco*, National Sales Director at *Droguería del Sud*.

- ♦ **BristolMyers Squibb (BMS)** has inked a deal with **BioNTech** for US\$3.5 billion, which features up to US\$7.6 billion in milestone payments. The agreement assists BMS in becoming a significant player in the race to bring to market. BioNTech will receive an initial payment of US\$1.5 billion and another US\$2 billion in non-contingent anniversary payments through 2028. Additional payments are tied to development, regulatory and commercial milestones. In return, BioNTech has granted co-development and co-commercialization rights to BMS.

- ♦ The **U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)** has granted an expanded interchangeable designation for **Celltrion's Yuflyma (adalimumab-aaty)**, now including prefilled syringes and autoinjectors. With this approval Yuflyma is now fully interchangeable with the reference product, *Humira*, across all marketed dosage forms and strengths. Yuflyma is a high-concentration, citrate-free biosimilar to *Humira*, approved for multiple inflammatory indications including rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis, ulcerative colitis, and plaque psoriasis, as well as other inflammatory diseases.

(Sources: Company Press Releases, Drug Store News, FierceBiotech, FiercePharma, PharmaVoice and World Pharma News)