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Future of Healthcare

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Rachel Power, Chief Executive, the Patients Association

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"Innovation will support us to keep the NHS's original promise to provide a comprehensive service, free at the point of use and based on clinical need."

Catherine Davies, Director, Digital Healthcare Council

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WRITTEN BY
Lucy Morgan,
Associate Director of Research and Policy, The Health Policy Partnership

Health system readiness reduces high levels of burden on the NHS

An increased capacity for diagnostics should enable a more targeted approach to healthcare, meaning better outcomes for patients and optimised use of NHS resources.

Readiness refers to all parts of a health system being prepared to adapt rapidly and sustainably to ensure innovations can be easily integrated.

Why is system readiness essential?
Health systems around the world are becoming increasingly stretched, but innovations in treatment, diagnostics, models of care and data collection are making care delivery more effective, sustainable and equitable.

Making sure health systems are ready to integrate these innovations will benefit individuals and societies alike. Current advances in precision medicine serve as a perfect case study for why system readiness is needed.

Readiness for precision medicine
Precision medicine uses an individual's unique biological material to guide the choice of treatment, increasing the likelihood of it being successful. Besides the obvious benefits of providing an effective treatment for the individual, precision medicine can also reduce the financial burden of care associated with ineffective treatments.

Innovative diagnostics are central to precision medicine
Treatment with precision medicine depends on appropriate patient identification, and key to its success is the availability of safe and accurate diagnostics. Readiness for innovative treatments using precision medicine must therefore be matched by integration of appropriate diagnostics. This requires system-wide planning, with equal emphasis on policy and practice. From a policy perspective, the Government must support the development of safe infrastructure and sufficient workforce capacity. The regulation of treatments and diagnostics should be distinct but linked, to reflect the different intentions of these two components of care while ensuring their approvals proceed at a similar and appropriate pace.

In practice, supply chains for materials used in diagnostics must be streamlined and reliable. Referral pathways should guide the use of diagnostics with clear direction for future disease management. Finally, ongoing data collection should support the analysis of diagnostic efficiency and accuracy to ensure patients and healthcare professionals have relevant information.

Getting system readiness wrong
The lack of consideration for whole system readiness can result in a therapy being licensed and available while the necessary diagnostic is not. For example, in the UK, supply chain delays on diagnostics used to complete certain PET scans make it impossible to identify people who might benefit from innovative treatments that are already available.

This adds unnecessary pressure to an already burdened health system. Holistic and proactive planning will ensure innovative care can reach the people who need it, ultimately increasing the sustainability of the health system.

Working with patients improves **safety and quality**

WRITTEN BY
Rachel Power
Chief Executive, The Patients Association

Patients working with healthcare professionals and health systems is the future of healthcare.

This year, 2023, is the Patients Association's 60th birthday. Since our foundation in 1963, some of our campaigning positions are now considered routine. The idea of patients working with professionals — or the healthcare system — is accepted. But there are many barriers to this happening in practice.

Partnership is better
When we talk about patient partnership, we mean two things: Patient partnership in patients' own care and treatment, and partnership in the design and delivery of services that patients use.

We are part way through a five-year strategy to embed patient partnership across the health and social care systems. Our vision is of health and care services designed and delivered through equal partnerships with patients — from decisions about service design to each decision a patient makes about their own care and treatment.

This approach answers the challenge of rebuilding health and care after the pandemic. We also believe it has many benefits for both patients and the healthcare system. Partnership can overcome persistent problems of patients not being listened to, is more likely to deliver services that meet patients' diverse needs and is key to tackling health inequalities.

Patient partnership strategy
Our strategy gives us a purpose to make patient partnership a reality at every level. We want an inclusive approach to how services are designed to meet the needs of patients and as the basis for the care of every patient. In our diamond anniversary year, our strategy is a natural development of the core themes that have always run through our work.

Patient partnership is key to the future of healthcare and managing rising levels of need. That is because when you work in partnership with patients, services are more likely to meet patients' needs. This means results for patients are better.

Partnership working is cost-effective because when a service meets patients' needs, it reduces the money wasted on ineffective services. When patients get the services they need, it reduces the need for services to fix problems caused by inadequate care and treatment.

Partnership with patients improves safety. A system that partners with patients values their input and responds to their concerns. Failure to listen to patients is often a factor in NHS safety scandals.

Making partnership work
Working in partnership can be as easy or as complicated as you want to make it. But a good place to start is simply by asking patients what they want — and listening to them.

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Health tracking made simple: how to manage diabetes daily

WRITTEN BY
Gary Scheiner
Diabetes Educator, Klinio

Advances in digital technology have made it easier than ever to monitor and manage diabetes.

Diabetes is a growing concern worldwide, with an estimated 537 million adults living with diabetes. Digital technology is revolutionising diabetes management, giving users access to tools for tracking and controlling their condition.

The number of people living with diabetes is predicted to rise to 643 million by 2030 and 783 million by 2045. More than 95% of people with diabetes have specifically type 2 diabetes. One of the challenges of diabetes is that it often goes undiagnosed, with many people not realising they have the condition until they develop complications.

How diabetes can be prevented

Unfortunately, with type 1 diabetes, there are no preventative measures. Gary Scheiner, Diabetes Educator at Klinio, explains: "There is also no cure for type 2 diabetes. However, a person can take steps with their diet and lifestyle to lower blood sugars to the point in which medications are unnecessary. This is called keeping diabetes 'in remission'."

Hence, developing healthy lifestyle habits will help lower blood sugar and reduce the risk of diabetes-related complications. Here's what can be done:

- Maintaining a healthy body weight
- Staying physically active
- Eating a healthy diet and avoiding sugar and saturated fats

Digital apps are transforming diabetes care

However, advances in digital technology have made it easier than ever to monitor and manage diabetes.

Now, many diabetes-tracking apps are available which allow you to monitor your blood sugar levels, track your food intake and exercise and log your medications. These apps can provide valuable insights into your diabetes management, allowing you to identify patterns and make adjustments to your diet and exercise routine.

Managing diabetes through the power of habit

One of these digital apps is Klinio, a prediabetes and diabetes management programme offering advanced features to help diabetes patients take control of their condition through a change of habit.

With knowledge and tips on nutrition, personalised meal plans, home workouts and tracking metrics, such as blood sugar levels and medication intake, Klinio is a helpful companion for anyone looking to enhance their health and wellbeing.

How to start managing diabetes

- Take the 60-second quiz and get yourself a personalised plan
- Set up your account
- Start following your personalised meal plan
- Keep tracking your health
- Start seeing the results

With a concrete plan to assist you on your journey, you can keep track of your diabetes management every day and stay in control of your health.

How tech offers a smart way to shed pounds — **and change lifestyles**

Losing weight isn't easy. However, non-invasive tech can help break the cycle of overeating and give access to a clinical team that encourages sustainable lifestyle change.

INTERVIEW WITH
Benoit Chardon
Chief Commercial Officer, Allurion

SPREAD WRITTEN BY
Tony Greenway

Something must be done about the obesity epidemic, insists Benoit Chardon, Chief Commercial Officer of weight loss solution company, Allurion. "Obesity is an increasing problem around the world," he says. "It has significant economic consequences and negatively affects GDP — but, more importantly, it has serious health implications."

The trouble is obesity is a complex issue: a chronic disease that is linked to an individual's relationship with food. Losing weight is similarly problematic because there's a huge gap between non-invasive weight loss solutions that are cheap and easy — but less effective — and invasive solutions (such as gastric band surgery) that are effective but riskier.

Taking a break from hunger to make a lasting lifestyle change

However, Chardon believes that the weight loss programme his company has developed closes this gap. It's available privately and, to be eligible for it, patients must be over 18 with a body mass index (BMI) of 27 or above. On average, they are expected to lose 15% of their total body weight over the duration of the programme, which lasts approximately 16 weeks.

First, patients swallow an intragastric balloon that inflates in their stomach to create a feeling of fullness, which helps break the habit of snacking and encourages smaller portions at mealtimes. Placement requires no surgery, endoscopy, anaesthesia or medication — and, after approximately 16 weeks, the balloon passes out of the body naturally.

> **On average, they are expected to lose 15% of their total body weight over the duration of the programme.**

"This sounds obvious," says Chardon, "but people who try but fail to lose weight usually do so for one reason: they're hungry. But if they don't feel hungry for four months — if they have 'a honeymoon from hunger' — they can take advantage of that time to change their behaviour."

This lifestyle shift is essential, he explains, otherwise — once the programme is finished — a patient could fall back into bad habits and regain the weight. So, when the balloon is in place, an entire behaviour change programme kicks in.

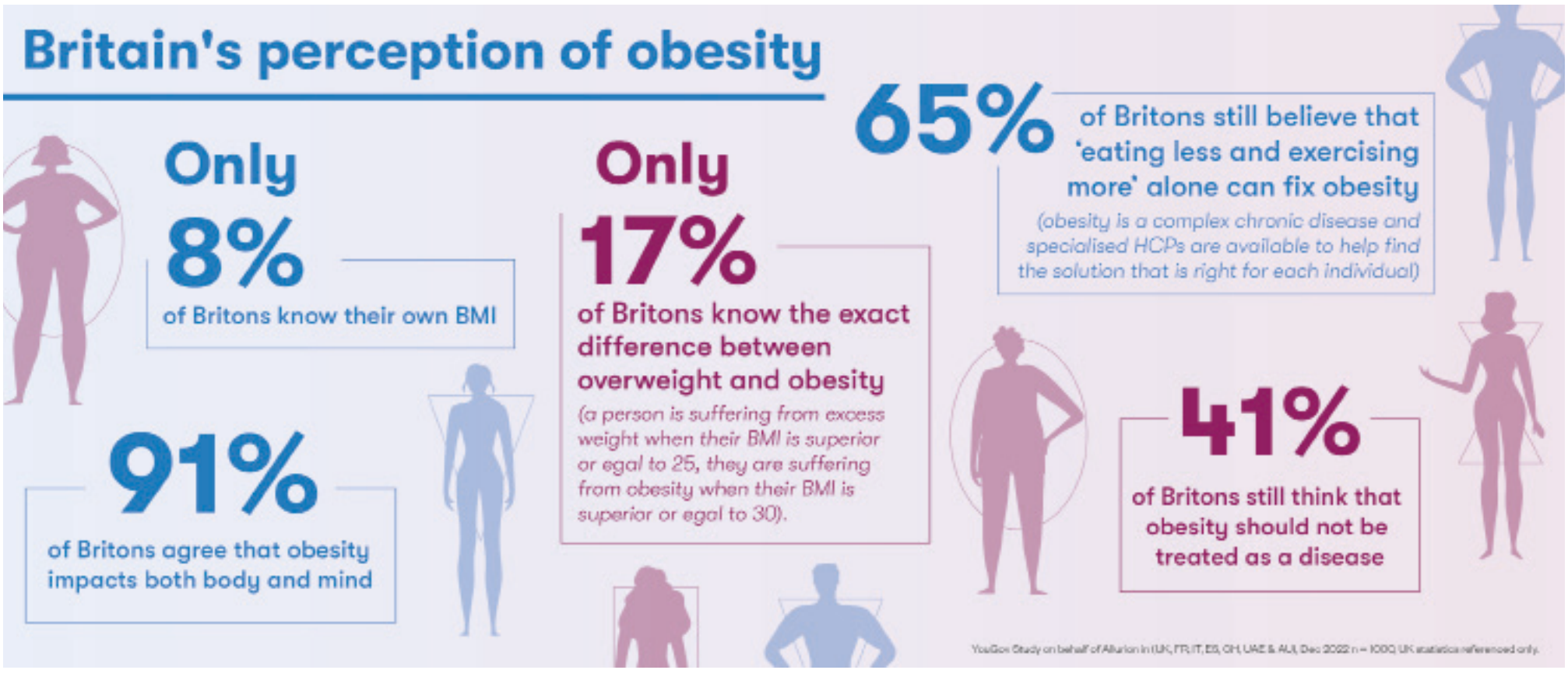
Using AI and big data to measure weight loss among patients

Patients are given a tracker and app, as well as the backing of a clinical support team to help them make long-lasting lifestyle changes. By leveraging AI and big data, the team — which can include physicians, nutritionists, fitness coaches and psychologists — measures information about a patient's weight, body fat, activity, sleep and other critical metrics.

"A patient's progress can be monitored in real time, and changes can be made to customise their weight loss journey," says Chardon. "There is a lot of complexity going on behind the scenes, which patients don't see. They get a simple, non-invasive procedure delivered in a safe, effective and convenient way."

Recently, Allurion entered into an agreement that will result in it becoming a publicly listed company. Chardon hopes that — long-term — the extra funding this will raise will enable research and development (R&D) breakthroughs such as sensors on the intragastric balloon that tell the app what the patient is eating so that diet plans can be adapted accordingly.

"Thankfully, I believe a weight loss revolution is underway," he says. "This is powered by better public understanding of weight loss — and by smart technology."



> **Alongside safe and rapid weight loss techniques, people also need to feel heard, understood and guided.**

Why the best weight loss results come from **expert and personalised support**

Losing weight — and then keeping it off — requires a change in behaviour that can be hard to achieve. That's why getting support from healthcare professionals is so crucial.

INTERVIEW WITH
Dr Shantanu Gaur
Founder and CEO, Allurion

"Weight loss is a difficult journey," admits Shantanu Gaur. "It's a battle against our underlying biology and our increasingly sedentary lifestyles. So, it doesn't matter what action we take to lose weight. If we don't change our underlying behaviour, any weight we lose in the short-term will just come back."

Gaur — Founder and CEO of weight loss company Allurion — has created a weight loss programme involving an intragastric balloon which patients swallow in capsule form. This inflates in the stomach to the size of a grapefruit and is designed to curb hunger and prevent overeating. Figures suggest that 10–15 kg (1.5–2.3 stone) can be lost within 16 weeks, and 25–30kg (3.9-4.7 stone) can be lost if a second capsule-delivered balloon is used. After four months, the balloon dissolves naturally.

Clinical expertise to support patients on the weight loss journey

As effective as this solution can be, Gaur admits that it's only half of the answer. The other half is clinical support — and lots of it. It's why people on the programme also have access to a behaviour change programme and a team of healthcare professionals including physicians, nutritionists, sleep experts, fitness coaches and psychologists. Together, they help patients make that all-important lifestyle/mindset change so that when the weight comes off, it stays off.

"Different experts fight weight loss on different fronts," explains Gaur. "For example, a psychologist can help patients examine their relationship with food, while a nutritionist will improve their diet. A sleep expert can advise them on getting a good night's rest, so they have the energy they need to make a lasting lifestyle change. We combine this expertise with a comprehensive behaviour change programme."

Gaur's message is: if you try to achieve weight loss on your own, you could end up being disappointed. "Trying and failing to lose weight can be an isolating and defeating experience that minimises motivation," he says.

"That can lead to the loneliness and dissatisfaction that those trying to lose weight often feel. There are all manners of weight loss devices, drugs and surgical approaches available but, ultimately, they leave the patient on their own. Lack of support has plagued the weight loss space, actually. The fact is that, alongside safe and rapid weight loss techniques, people also need to feel heard, understood and guided. That requires a cohesive programme and healthcare professionals who can help turbocharge behaviour change."

Personalised programmes can be a weight loss game-changer

Everyone's weight loss journey is different. To be really effective, any programme should also be tailored to an individual's personal needs.

Gaur's solution uses AI and machine learning to monitor patients, study their data, predict outcomes and identify those who need a correction course to get them back on track. This cutting-edge technology allows the solution to scale while still being personalised and has revolutionised the way weight loss is delivered; and, Gaur says, in the future, it could even be deployed to flag a potential issue and help prevent people from gaining weight in the first place. "Personalised weight loss programmes are a game-changer," he says.

"Unlike cookie-cutter approaches, they provide individualised support and strategies that account for the unique needs and challenges of each person. Take exercise, for example. Some people might prefer to take up long-distance running. Others might prefer swimming. Others might simply prefer to get the most from walking. But that's the beauty of a personalised programme. It can increase your motivation, help you shift towards healthier habits that work for you and, ultimately, increase your chances of weight loss success."

Find out more at **allurion.com/en**

GP mental health: why we must recognise the person behind the doctor

GP mental health is an increasingly troubling issue, and we must not forget to think about the people who look after our health.

As a GP, I'm often asked what I believe is the biggest challenge facing general practice today. The clear answer for me is protecting clinician wellbeing.

Current state of GP mental health

In recent times, there have been increased instances of clinician suicide, hostility towards doctors on social media and abuse in surgeries. Also, levels of work-related stress and burnout are on the rise to such a level that I think it can no longer be accepted as 'just part of the job.'

In the Medical Minds survey of UK GPs, commissioned by Livi, four in five doctors said they had experienced either stress, anxiety, depression, burnout or PTSD in the last two years. Only a third said they did not require support for their mental health at present.

Possible solutions to help

First, we need to talk about these issues a lot more. We need to change how clinicians are viewed and see the 'person behind the doctor' as it were. Open recognition of clinician burnout, more balanced media coverage for GPs and better patient-facing information could all help.

In the workplace, setting a realistic, nationalised standard for the number of patient contacts per day and administrative requirements could ease current pressures. And providing more flexibility to GPs in terms of working patterns is something I've seen have a positive effect firsthand as Medical Director in a large digital healthcare company.

Where demand is overwhelming, digital tools can enable capacity to be targeted across the system. Furthermore, automation can help reduce the administrative burden placed on clinicians.

Finally, we need to identify potential signs of burnout before it's too late and provide more comprehensive support for GPs, particularly given that more than half of the doctors we surveyed said they had considered leaving the profession due to their mental health.

This GP 'wellbeing problem' poses an existential threat to the long-term future of general practice. To truly tackle the workforce crisis, we must tackle this as well.

i Read the Medical Minds survey: **partners.livi.co.uk/medical-minds**

WRITTEN BY
Dr Harriet Bradley
Medical Director UK, Livi

Paid for by **Livi**

We must continue to scale innovation to **reduce pressures on the NHS**

Digital technologies provide a promising solution to help the NHS cope with pressures.

The NHS is facing seemingly impossible challenges. The demand for care is at record levels, with over 7 million people waiting for treatment. An estimated 1 in 10 staff posts are vacant. Extra funding is not yet having a significant impact on increasing system capacity and reducing waiting times.

The potential of technology

Digital technologies provide a promising solution to help the NHS cope with pressures. However, it is still early days for their widespread adoption.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, healthcare technology became an instant necessity. An increase in online appointments led to more patients seen compared to pre-pandemic levels. Digital care also contributed to higher staff productivity and better collaboration across organisations. This showed that it is possible to implement effective changes during a crisis.

Digital healthcare providers are helping the NHS use resources more efficiently.

Opportunities for the NHS

Post-pandemic, digital innovation continues. Many companies want to be part of the solution for a sustainable future healthcare system.

Digital healthcare providers are helping the NHS use resources more efficiently. Livi, an online GP service, increases workforce capacity by encouraging GPs to work remotely and flexibly. This allows staff to split their time between digital and face-to-face consultations. Due to this, 90% of Livi GPs report working more hours each week.

TeleTracking is increasing hospital bed availability through electronically managing beds. Most hospitals calculate their bed availability by staff manually counting all free beds. TeleTracking's technology helps quickly identify spare beds, on average reducing the length of hospital stay by 11%.

Other companies support the NHS by expanding care outside of traditional settings. This reduces pressure on hospitals that are operating above safe capacity levels. Technology-enabled care agency Elder matches patients with a live-in carer. Elder helps people leave hospitals faster by efficiently arranging ongoing support at home.

Remote monitoring provider Lilli supports people to live independently at home for longer. Its technology detects early signs of illness and enables faster intervention. This reduces bed blocking, unplanned hospital visits and emergency call-outs.

We must look at growing innovative solutions. They are leading to measurable benefits for patients and staff. Innovation will support us to keep the NHS's original promise to provide a comprehensive service, free at the point of use and based on clinical need.

WRITTEN BY
Catherine Davies
Director, Digital Healthcare Council

How treatment-outcome data can unlock the door to **better healthcare**

Measuring treatment outcomes systematically has the potential to optimise and personalise healthcare for future patient journeys.

INTERVIEW WITH
Chris May
Founding Director, Mayden

WRITTEN BY
Tony Greenway

The healthcare system is facing a perfect storm: an ageing population and a historical lack of funding and resources. In times like these, its inefficiencies become all too glaring. "A major problem is that the system is fragmented," insists Chris May, Founding Director of Mayden, a company that creates technology to support healthcare services. "Patient information isn't thorough, consistent or joined up — technology and data sit at the heart of that."

Optimising the use of healthcare data

One way of achieving this is with 'outcomes-focused, data-driven healthcare,' says May. This means using information about how past patients responded to treatment to inform and optimise treatment for present ones. Yet, it's an idea which doesn't often happen in practice.

"Currently, a clinician will build up a profile of a new patient by asking them various questions, running tests, then use their clinical experience to work out the most beneficial treatment pathway," explains May. "What the clinician can't do, however, is find all patients in their database with similar profiles, look at the treatment pathways those people took and the outcomes they obtained. They could then use that data to inform the best treatment pathway for their new patient."

Measuring outcomes to transform healthcare

Why don't clinicians work this way? Well, there are a few reasons, notes May. The most fundamental one is that — and this frequently surprises people, he admits — healthcare services often don't measure outcomes consistently. If they did, it would prove transformative.

Today's digital Electronic Health Records (EHR) will include data about the type of treatment a person has received or is receiving. "For example, it will note that someone has had a hip replacement," explains May.

"But a hip replacement isn't an outcome. It's an input. What we really need to know is: After that hip replacement, was the patient able to walk without pain?"

Standardise to personalise

"And what was the journey they took to get to that outcome? What happened in the run-up to surgery, what did the recovery period look like? When did rehabilitation start and what form did it take?' Unfortunately, that kind of information rarely gets recorded systematically."

If it was, May argues that it could be used to design standardised treatment pathways tailored specifically to the needs of individual patients. That optimises healthcare — and personalises it. "It can seem counter-intuitive," he admits. "But what might sound like a data-driven sausage machine is actually the opposite. It's a very patient-centred way of working."

It could also identify potential problems early and be more cost-efficient.

> **Data-driven healthcare is an inevitability.**

Giving patients more control

Mayden has developed an EHR for the NHS's talking therapies services, which includes the care pathway data and outcome measurements for 8 million patients.

"That's 8 million patient journeys that can tell us what works and what doesn't for different patient cohorts."

It should also be possible to put this power into the hands of patients to level up patient-clinician relationships.

"In many cases, the patient can feel subordinate to the clinician," says May. "We already allow patients to book and manage their own appointments and input their own outcome measurements. Why not give them the data to make informed choices as well? Then they will feel more in control of their healthcare."

Personalised data is used to tailor the customer experience in other sectors such as banking and retail, so May believes that data-driven healthcare is an inevitability. "It's going to happen — it's just a question of when. Using data in a more productive and efficient way will improve the patient experience."

How digital platforms can make care easier for cancer patients

Cancer patients are being supported in their care journey by community pharmacists with digital solutions.

INTERVIEW WITH
Xavier Mesrobian
Senior Vice President, Commercial, EMENA, Accord Healthcare

SPREAD WRITTEN BY
Mark Nicholls

Digital technology can increasingly empower patients with knowledge and understanding of their condition, which can improve treatment adherence and help contribute to improved outcomes.

Digital solutions

Patients can access information, log and track symptoms over time and even link up with healthcare professionals in community settings for advice when needed.

For practitioners, it develops a digital dialogue with patients, without breaking the traditional physical link. Playing a central role in this are pharmacists who often act as an additional key resource for concerned patients, especially when GP appointments are not immediately available.

Access for patients

Industry expert Xavier Mesrobian says digital solutions are helping to make healthcare even more patient-centric. "Digital solutions continue to optimise healthcare, offering faster, more direct and patient-centred advances and bringing tailored information right into the hands of patients — quite literally," he says.

"In recent years, and particularly through the Covid-19 pandemic, we saw great strides in the likes of telemedicine and remote tools. This trend will only continue as our populations become increasingly tech-savvy when it comes to accessing resources."

Online programme

The question Mesrobian raises is: How are we leveraging that to improve the quality of healthcare? He points to two digital solutions Accord Healthcare has developed to support cancer patients and pharmacists.

Oncodemia is an online training programme, created specifically for community pharmacists. It is designed to advance their knowledge in providing support to cancer patients seeking advice on some of the symptoms of cancer and its management.

Pharmacists can play a crucial role for patients throughout their cancer journey, from prevention, to screening, to advising to seek specialist attention, all the way through treatment and survivorship or end of life support.

With more patients using smartphones and tablets to access services, he says the oncology digital programme combines community pharmacist education with additional support and information for patients being treated for cancer.

Track symptoms

Mesrobian, who has been with Accord Healthcare for seven years and is Senior Vice President (Commercial) for the Europe, Middle East and North Africa regions, explains that a second tool — the Unify Health app — has been designed for people living with cancer to locate and speak to trained community pharmacists nearby, as well as to track their symptoms and learn more about their condition.

Often, this can include simple questions a patient may have. The app can link them to a local pharmacist who has been through the Oncodemia programme and can help provide the answer. "The idea behind the Unify Health app is to create a dialogue between patient and pharmacist, and aims to enhance communication within the healthcare system," he explains.

"In facilitating this connection, the app enables the pharmacist to have a better sense of what is actually happening to the patient through their journey and advise on how this can be addressed through the healthcare system."

This is about providing the information patients need — precisely where, how and when they most need it."

Environmental benefits

The Unify Health app has been developed in collaboration with the Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust as well as digital startup Care Across, which focuses on cancer care, and UK-renowned cancer charity Macmillan Cancer Support. Alongside Oncodemia, it has been rolled out across a number of countries in Europe and the UK.

Digitisation also has environmental benefits with less printing in a more paper-free world and helps cut down on packaging.

Mesrobian also points to a shift towards ePILs — electronic patient information leaflets — with information on medicines provided digitally rather than via a printed leaflet in every box of tablets.

Additional medium

Emphasising that digital is not a replacement for the traditional patient-healthcare practitioner relationship, he says: "It is an additional medium that comes in the mix of how we are trying to inform patients, pharmacists, doctors and nurses — to make sure that information is accessible.

"This is about providing the information patients need — precisely where, how and when they most need it."

Accord is the international arm of Intas Pharmaceuticals and one of Europe's fastest-growing pharmaceutical companies, operating in over 45 countries to provide access to essential medicines.

For more information, please visit **accord-healthcare.com**

The potential of a **digital-first** approach to patient information leaflets

Moving from paper-based to electronic versions of in-pack leaflets can offer important benefits to patients and the environment.

Providing patient information leaflets in a digital format can deliver significant resource, efficiency and environmental benefits. It could also make the information more accessible, timely and avoid delays to patients receiving medicines.

Pilot projects

Currently, every box of tablets must — by law — contain patient information about dosage, safety, correct usage and possible side effects.

Complications can arise when these leaflets need to be updated or translated into another language since the reprinting and repacking can take many months — risking disruption to the supply chain and potentially delaying the receipt of medicines by patients.

Trials are underway on switching from print to digital format with ePILs (electronic Patient Information Leaflets), where information on the pack would send patients to the online leaflet.

Australia, New Zealand, Japan and India have already started to roll out electronic product information systems, and pilots are underway in Spain, Germany, Belgium and Austria — with a UK Taskforce examining similar initiatives.

In Poland, Accord Healthcare is currently working alongside others in the industry to provide ePILs in Ukrainian, enabling refugees from Ukraine to access critical medicine information through the Polish healthcare system.

Sustainability benefit

But, Xavier Mesrobian explains: there are broader practical reasons for switching to ePILs.

"Statistics show that up to 20% of people discard the leaflet without reading it; and out of those who read it, 85% only look at it the first time but not for repeat prescriptions," he says.

"That is a lot of wasted paper, water and energy. Moving to ePILs would dramatically reduce such waste and be significantly more sustainable."

Mesrobian also believes it can address some common industry-wide issues of medicine delays and shortages. He says over one-quarter of out-of-stock incidents are estimated to be caused by patient leaflet updates and reprints.

Language divide

In the future, a scannable code on medicine packs could bring up the information online in several languages. That can benefit countries without the resources to translate or those reliant on imported packs.

For older patients or those with sight disabilities, the font size could be increased digitally or accompanied by audio and, for medications that come with a device, illustrative guides could be provided.

Mesrobian adds that moving to digital product information will also make supply chains more agile by reducing turnaround times on printing, translation and packaging and reducing stock delays — though he stresses the importance of patient involvement in the process.

"It's critical to ensure that we consider all patient needs and abilities, especially those of the most vulnerable. No patient should be left behind."

In the future, a scannable code on medicine packs could bring up the information online in several languages.

How a new platform is making healthcare **accessible to all**

A new, NHS Digital-approved, multilingual one-stop hybrid care platform allows users to book online consultations, monitor personal health indicators and more — right on their devices.

Fungai Ndemera, founder and CEO of CheckUp Health, is determined to improve access to primary healthcare. "My father and father-in-law both died from undiagnosed diabetes. Knowing that early diagnosis would have likely saved their lives makes me want to ensure that does not happen to other patients."

Enhancing access to care

The digital healthcare solution and app, which is in the implementation stage, aims to improve equity of access to appointments. "Take the introduction of the NHS app. It's supposed to be for everyone, but it's only available to people who can read and write English — and people who can type."

"Our app and clinical dashboard is available in six languages, and we'd like it to be 20 languages by the end of Q3."

Using AI to combat cultural insensitivities

Ndemera believes that the app, in time, can use artificial intelligence (AI) to support better solutions to cultural sensitivities. CheckUp Health is combatting health inequalities in appointment access for minority patient groups.

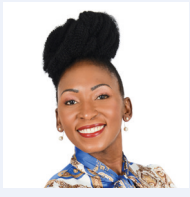
AI-powered Natural Language Processing (NLP) can be used to develop chatbots or virtual assistants that can converse with patients, such as Muslim women, in their native language. This can help to provide a more personalised and culturally sensitive experience, especially when discussing personal matters.

AI-powered recommendation systems can also help match Muslim women with female doctors who understand their culture and are sensitive to their needs.

Deep-rooted lack of trust

Research for the app's pilot revealed some hard truths: "We did a pilot when Black people were dying the most from Covid-19, compared to their White counterparts. Our aim was to support people who are diabetic and have hypertension to manage their health at home."

"One of the key outcomes of that report was that people don't trust the system. They don't trust what the centre is communicating. It also comes from the centre's attitude that certain members of society are 'hard to reach.' By making digital technology accessible to all, leaders will enable better accessibility to healthcare across society."



INTERVIEW WITH
Fungai Ndemera
Founder & CEO,
CheckUp Health

INTERVIEW WITH
James Martin

In 2019, the healthcare industry accounted for an estimated 5.2% of greenhouse gas emissions globally.

It will take more than recycling tools to shift to **sustainable healthcare**

We need to change the way healthcare services are delivered to both assure patient safety and reduce any negative environmental impacts.

Healthcare is a known polluter. In 2019, the healthcare industry accounted for an estimated 5.2% of greenhouse gas emissions globally, perhaps not surprising when some countries — crucially — spend up to 20% of their GDP on healthcare.

Healthtech can reduce environmental impact

Healthtech (medical devices, diagnostic and digital technologies) has a pivotal role to play in changing the way that healthcare is delivered. Although reducing waste and recycling used devices are critical to reducing our environmental impact, using these interventions alone will not get us to the NHS net zero targets of 2045. The healthtech sector has invested heavily in developing revolutionary devices and models of care.

A pandemic that shifted healthcare practices

Healthcare changed in nature throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. The general public conducted their own diagnostic tests at home in the form of lateral flow tests, we moved to remote triage for many patients and remote monitoring for continued care in the home. Although born from necessity and crisis, we can take these lessons and use them to reduce the resource burden on hospitals, in turn reducing our environmental impact.

The correlation between the changing climate and the impact on human health is alarming.

Quickly adopting healthcare innovations

The industry is innovative in nature, and it is always honing its skills. From shrinking PCR machines from the size of a room to being able to sit on a table, to the use of robotics in minimally invasive surgery and devices that can safely capture heavily polluting anaesthetic agents, the breadth of innovation in this space is remarkable. To ensure that these devices can deliver sustainable outcomes, which are better for both people and the planet, our healthcare services must be equipped to adopt them.

Sustainable healthcare is better for everyone

The correlation between the changing climate and the impact on human health is alarming. The negative effect of air pollution on respiratory diseases is only one example. By using some of the interventions as detailed here, we will not only be reducing our impact on the planet, but we will also be reducing the impact on ourselves.

WRITTEN BY
Addie MacGregor
Sustainability
Executive, ABHI

How the humble barcode helps the NHS save thousands of lives and millions of pounds

For almost 50 years, the humble barcode has been transforming the way we work and live.

WRITTEN BY
Glen Hodgson
Head of Healthcare,
GS1 UK

At the supermarket checkout, every scan captures unique product information so every item can be identified and processed. This is made possible using GS1 standards.

And it is so simple to scan — no one ever went on a half-day training course to learn how to self-checkout. This very principle continues to revolutionise everyday life, especially in healthcare.

Better patient care with barcodes

GS1 standards provide a common way of identifying every person, every product and every place throughout the supply chain — all the way to the patient's bedside.

By scanning barcodes on medicines, medical devices, patient wristbands, staff badges or locations, it is quicker and easier to build a true and complete picture of a patient's care journey. This reduces manual processes, decreasing the risk of human error and improving patient safety.

The best evidence for the life-saving potential of barcodes in healthcare comes from the Scan4Safety programme launched by the Department of Health and Social Care in 2016. Results from the programme suggest that, if this approach was adopted by every hospital in England, over 3.2 million hours of staff time and nearly £120 million could be saved and re-invested back into patient care.

Over 3.2 million hours of staff time and nearly £120 million could be saved and re-invested back into patient care.

Building a global standard

Today, more than half of all hospitals are adopting global data standards to uniquely identify patients. Many healthcare products now hold a GS1 barcode, but there is more to be done.

We remain committed to working with NHS leaders and clinicians to build on these successes and accelerate adoption across UK health services. We have seen exceptional progress in the implementation of Scan4Safety. First in England, then across Scotland and Wales and soon to be followed by Northern Ireland.

Collaboration and trusted data are the keys to delivering better care for all and can play a vital role in helping more organisations adapt to the challenges of today and build resilience for the future.

Digital solutions offer a much more effective way of protecting patients than just asking healthcare providers — who are doing incredible work under unimaginable pressure — to simply 'try harder.' We need global standards to be in place across the UK, and Scan4Safety represents a major step in making this a reality.

WRITTEN BY
Anne Godfrey
CEO, GS1 UK

Scan the QR code to find out more

Why clinicians, patients and healthcare staff all want a **digital health service**

NHS England financial reports for 2021–22 highlight that £234 million is spent every year simply storing paper medical records, highlighting a financial burden of antiquated systems.

WRITTEN BY
Peter Mann
Digital Strategy Lead,
Xerox

Current healthcare systems are productivity killers for clinicians, making it increasingly time-consuming for patients and putting greater strain on healthcare staff trying to find the information they need. The Department of Health and Social Care finds that only 20% of NHS organisations are digitally mature.

Patients, not paperwork

Health customers have taught us that the motivation that healthcare systems should strive for is 'patients, not paperwork.' Transitioning from paper to a digital service saves significant sums of money, saves space, lowers carbon emissions and redeploys staff closer to the front line of care.

An example is the NHS's virtual ward which allows patients to get the care they need, safely, from their homes — while receiving the same experience they typically would in a hospital setting, without having to physically be there. Currently, virtual wards are run via an app which the NHS hopes will reduce pressure on staff and make 25,000 beds available by the end of next year as a direct result.

As well as clinical use cases, digitisation of medical records has proven to help with day-to-day operational needs such as automating subject access requests, supporting risk stratification, providing data for long-term clinical research programmes and supporting the move to create an intelligent summary of care record.

Improve working culture

Staff retention is a major problem in the NHS due to an increasingly high rate of burnout and a lack of work-life balance. Analysis of NHS Digital figures found that at least 400 staff a week in England are leaving to improve their work-life balance.

The cost of not addressing retention issues currently stands at £21.7 billion, according to the latest NHS Staff Retention Review. Digitisation should enable some healthcare organisations to support flexible working by removing that physical bond of work being a place where paper medical records are stored.

Make the switch to digital

There is more to be done, but healthcare organisations are taking steps in the right direction. Notably, the NHS is setting the ambition for the majority of health and social care services to have digital foundations in place, such as electronic records, by March 2025.

The switch requires proactive change programmes within the healthcare industry. This change will engage staff across the healthcare sector, streamline services, reduce costs and ultimately provide better quality care for patients.

Perpetual crisis in the NHS: how the industry can help

Members have recognised persistent 'crisis management' as the greatest challenge facing the sector in 2023.

The benefits of digital tech solutions during Covid-19 were widely acknowledged and implemented.

As the country has begun to move on from the initial impact of the pandemic, techUK recently surveyed its health and social care members to reflect upon the steps taken by the Government in 2022 and identify the upcoming challenges in 2023 in ensuring digital technology improves outcomes and drives efficiencies.

WRITTEN BY
Julian David
CEO, techUK

Maintaining health momentum

There is a pressing need to ensure that digital technology is utilised to lessen some of the pressures on the health and social care sector.

techUK's survey asked participants to reflect upon the steps taken by the Government in 2022 to continue the healthcare sector's digital transformation journey.

Our members, comprising digital businesses in the UK, identified the intention to join up health and care, including commitments made on shared care records for all citizens by 2024 (27%) and the placing of integrated care systems on statutory footing (24%) as the two actions that would have the most positive impact on digital transformation in health and social care.

Members also recognised the positive impact of the increase of the NHS budget to £3.3 billion and the extra funding of £1 billion to Adult Social Care.

Progress in health and social care

The survey also asked members how much progress they thought had been made in the health and social care system's digital transformation journey in 2022.
This issue divided members: 50% thought a fair amount of progress had been made, while 37% thought there had only been minimal progress.

This means the findings of the Health and Social Care Select Committee's enquiry into the progress of NHS England's digital transformation journey are of even greater importance.

Challenges in 2023

Respondents were asked to identify the greatest challenges to digital health tech in 2023.

The well-documented issues concerning the elective care backlog, retention and recruitment of staff, the demanding economic outlook and the demands of an ageing population have combined to make the perfect storm of difficulties facing the NHS.

Therefore, members have recognised persistent 'crisis management' as the greatest challenge facing the sector in 2023.

Industry went on to pinpoint insufficient funding for digital transformation, resistance to digital transformation and a lack of awareness regarding the potential benefits of technologies as three further areas of concern.

As the sector continues to face these challenges, the Government and industry must work together to find viable solutions to improve the way the sector operates.

techUK's Health and Social Care Programme will continue to build upon actions highlighted in techUK's Ten Point Plan for Healthtech our Right from the Start report.

Scan the QR code to view our 2023 strategy.

Smart system to deliver tailored **pain relief and improved quality of life**

A smart method of spinal cord stimulation means more accurate therapy dosing for patients and objective data, allowing physicians to monitor their holistic wellbeing more precisely.

INTERVIEW WITH
Dr Simon Thomson
Consultant in Pain Medicine, Mid & South Essex University Hospitals NHSFT

INTERVIEW WITH
Dr Ganesan Baranidharan
Consultant in Pain Medicine, The Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust

WRITTEN BY
Sheree Hanna

Advances in technology for the treatment of chronic nerve pain are helping bring welcome relief to many patients as well as improving their quality of life.

Clinicians are also using the technology to customise treatment. They are harnessing the objective data they are now able to retrieve from a smart Spinal Cord Stimulation (SCS) system to help them further refine the targeting and tailoring of treatment for their patients.

Since using Saluda Medical's Evoke® System, the first and only Smart SCS™ available in the UK, leading physicians in the field of pain medicine have reported some dramatic changes to the lives of sufferers.

Electrical pulses for pain relief

SCS is a safe and effective treatment that has been in use for more than 55 years and uses a small, implantable device to deliver tiny electrical pulses to the spinal cord. These pulses interrupt your body's pain signals to reduce the sensation of pain before they travel up your spinal cord and reach your brain.

The difference with the Evoke® system is that it can listen to how your body reacts to these pulses and auto-adjusts the stimulation levels 40+ times a second, to ensure the individualised dose is delivered as prescribed by the physician.

Carol Mortley, a patient in her 60s who was unable to get a referral from her local pain service, was desperate to live without excruciating pain. After her husband read an article about the work of Dr Simon Thomson, Consultant in Pain Medicine, Mid & South Essex University Hospitals NHSFT, the couple went to see him.

Dr Thomson says: "We managed to get her treatment funded through the NHS. She is now recording a 90% pain relief, much-improved quality of life and is very happy with it."

Dr Thomson says that with older SCS systems, the stimulation patients received could vary as they moved or even coughed or sneezed; and often, they would adjust it themselves to try and help with their pain. However, this could result in them not getting the right levels of therapy that the physicians prescribed.

This system allows for neuro-monitoring, enabling clinicians to see exactly what levels of therapy patients are allowing themselves.

For the first time, if the patient comes back for reprogramming, we now have objective information on the body's response to stimulation that can tell us if everything is working as it should be.

Complexity of chronic pain

Dr Ganesan Baranidharan, Consultant in Pain Medicine at The Leeds Teaching Hospitals, has treated more than 40 cases with the new Smart SCS system.

"One of the big advantages of this system is that for the first time, if the patient comes back for reprogramming, we now have objective information on the body's response to stimulation that can tell us if everything is working as it should be," he says. Acknowledging that SCS as a treatment for severe nerve pain may not work for everybody, he is confident that it is effective in over 70% of patients. "But whatever the percentage of pain relief, there will be improvements in quality of life, as seen in the Evoke study, with patients seeing meaningful improvement in pain, mood, sleep, function or quality of life."

Dr Thomson explains that chronic pain is complex and not just about measuring pain intensity but about multidimensional improvements in patient outcomes including pain relief, functional ability, quality of life as well as improvements in mood and sleep. For instance, one person might get improved pain control, but it doesn't make any difference to their lifestyle, whereas another might not have had much pain reduction but are now able to walk.

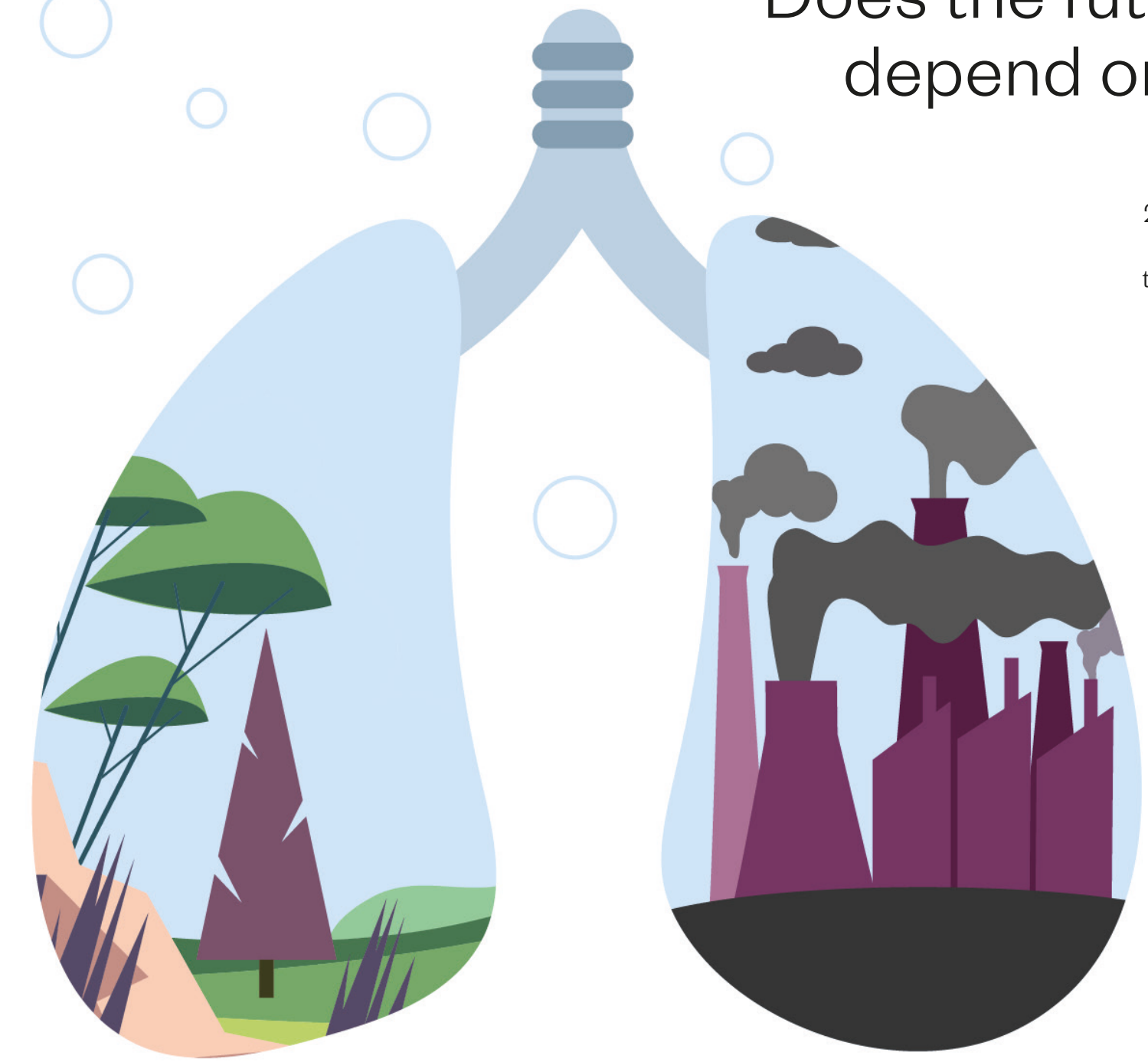
Tool to guide the pathway

Despite being available through the NHS, there is often a lack of access pathways and knowledge about when to escalate a patient. Consequently, the SCS E-health tool has been developed to help GPs determine if their patient is appropriate for referral. Hopefully, with this tool, more physicians and their teams can see an end to debilitating chronic pain.

Scan the QR code to find out more

Does the future of health depend on **clean air?**

Clean air would prevent the 28,000–35,000 premature deaths a year caused by air pollution — the single greatest threat to human health. The economic arguments for acting on clean air are clear, as the Government estimates that between 2017 and 2025, air pollutants will cost the NHS and social care system £1.6 billion.



WRITTEN BY
Laura Fatah
Policy and Research Manager, Policy Connect

Toxic air is killing children in the UK, both on the streets and in the home. The tragic cases of Ella Kissi-Debrah and Awaab Ishak demonstrate the urgency to act. Unfortunately, the air quality targets set by the Environment Improvement Plan 2023 fail to align with international World Health Organization standards.

Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty reports: "A better understanding of how we can prevent and reduce indoor air pollution should now be a priority." Around 80–90% of our time is spent indoors. However, more is known about air quality outdoors than indoors; and indoor air is not regulated or routinely monitored.

Pollution takes lives

'Ella's Law' — formally the Clean Air (Human Rights) Bill — is named after Ella Kissi-Debrah, who sadly became the first person in the UK to have air pollution recognised as a cause of her death, after passing away in 2013 at just nine years old.

Ella's Law would create a human right to breathe clean air, set legal limits for indoor and outdoor air pollutants, and place duties on the Government to achieve and maintain clean air within five years. To show support for Ella's Law, Early Day Motion 679 has been signed by nearly 60 MPs from across the political spectrum – and more are signing each week.

Medical research has shown that air pollution is linked to many long-term health conditions, including asthma, heart conditions and even dementia in older people.

Importance of air quality

Medical research has shown that air pollution is linked to many long-term health conditions, including asthma, heart conditions and even dementia in older people. The Air Quality Expert Group (AQEG) reported last year that indoor environments can become toxic more easily and with fewer emissions than outdoor environments. While the Government's understanding of the health impacts of pollution has grown over the years, rapid action is needed.

Indoor air quality matters

Cross-party think tank Policy Connect is supporting Ella's Law; making the case for clean air publicly and politically.

Carbon monoxide is the deadliest indoor pollutant. The All-Party Parliamentary Carbon Monoxide Group (APPCOG) leads Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week, bringing lifesaving messages to millions of people each year.

Together, we can tackle the problem of dirty air — but the Government needs to join the fight.

WRITTEN BY
Baroness Jenny Jones
Moulsecoomb, House of Lords, Green Party

A time and place to be bold: why Wales is the place of choice for life science innovation

Image provided by Life Sciences Hub Wales

The life sciences industry played a significant role in tackling the Covid-19 pandemic by reacting quickly, collaborating and innovating in diagnostics, treatments and vaccines.

WRITTEN BY
Cari-Anne Quinn
CEO, Life Sciences Hub Wales

The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated a shift towards increased use of technology through apps, wearables, remote consultations and more — opening up the floodgates for innovative uses of both technology and health data.

Now, healthcare systems worldwide — including the NHS — are facing their most challenging time in memory, with struggling services, workforce shortages, rising demand and increased inequalities.

As we face these challenges, collaboration between healthcare and industry continues to offer opportunities for solutions. More than ever, we must nurture the collaborative efforts of the life sciences sector. The UK, and Wales in particular, have reason to be bold about our ability to do so.

The UK's strength: invested in innovation

As a whole, the UK is invested in life sciences innovation. Our tax environment, funding support systems and investment priorities all place the UK as one of the most attractive places in the world to build a business in life sciences.

This is reflected in the Government's ambitious commitment to life sciences, as laid out in the Life Sciences Vision for the UK, which has a significant focus on innovation, including funding and access to finance for startups. In fact, in last year's budget, £39.8 billion was allocated to funding research and development across all sectors in the UK between 2022–2025.

Wales' unique position of strength

As a nation of the UK, Wales benefits from this competitive environment while, at the same time, being different and unique from the rest of the UK.

The latest statistics released from the Office for Life Sciences (OLS) showed that the income growth of Welsh life sciences businesses is outperforming that of life sciences businesses in the rest of the UK. They demonstrated that the number of people employed in life sciences is also growing and keeping pace with the rest of the UK.

Meanwhile, the latest export figures for Wales, released late last year, reveal the growing global influence of Welsh life sciences. They showed that pharmaceutical products are in the top five products being exported from Wales, with a yearly value of £1.1 billion — up a whopping 30% compared to the previous period.

In Wales, we have several ingredients that feed into our position as this compact powerhouse for life sciences. NHS Wales is key to those ingredients for success. We have one, single, interconnected health system that is far easier to navigate than many other regions can offer. This makes Wales incredibly attractive to healthcare innovators. They can access a patient population of over 3 million people, via one health system with seven closely connected health boards.

Pharmaceutical products are in the top five products being exported from Wales, with a yearly value of £1.1 billion.

A hub for catalysing innovation

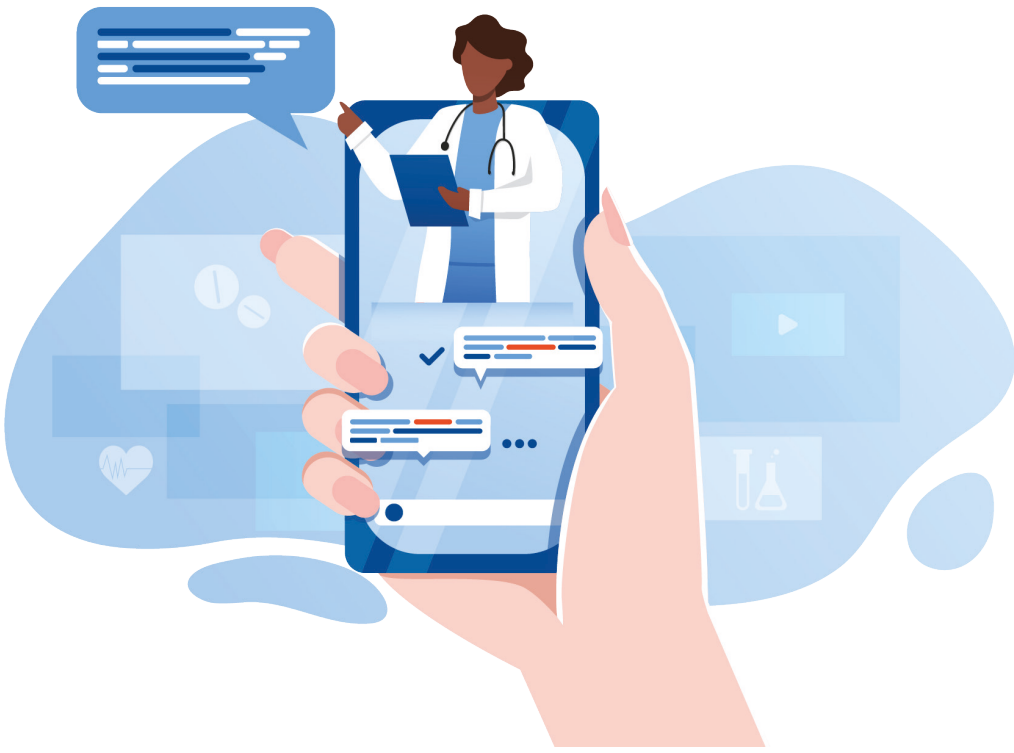
In the last few years, Welsh Government has stepped up even more to encourage and foster new life sciences businesses setting up in Wales, and the recently released Innovation Strategy for Wales reinforces this further.

Wales offers a highly supportive ecosystem to thrive in, but we also know that successful partnerships and collaborations don't emerge from thin air. Innovative companies can still struggle to find appropriate partners, and health and social care providers often don't have the time, skills or resources to search for the latest solutions to their challenges.

This is at the heart of our mission at Life Sciences Hub Wales. We believe multidisciplinary collaboration is key to innovation, the nation meeting the healthcare needs of the future and life sciences businesses being able to achieve their potential. We support this by acting as a dynamic interface, helping vital life sciences reach the health and social care frontline fast and effectively.

We're proud to be at the centre of such a vibrant ecosystem and to play our part in helping it flourish. So, if you are part of a health and social care organisation or innovative life sciences business, visit **lshubwales.com/futureofhealthcare**

Private e-health solution at the fingertips of UK patients



E-health has been revolutionised in recent years, with patients and health providers increasingly utilising online platforms as the most effective way to ensure patients receive the specialist care they need when confronted with health problems.

WRITTEN BY
Teo Sardá
Chief Development Officer, Top Doctors

A global healthcare portal is at the forefront of the e-health revolution, supporting patients and healthcare providers in achieving the best specialist care.

E-health approach to all-around patient care

Teo Sardá, the chief development officer of international company Top Doctors says: "When we launched in the UK in 2017, we were aware that the private health sector was growing fast. It was therefore a good moment for our services to be adopted in the UK."

He adds that: "We had the major benefit of utilising our excellent platform in the USA." The platform has identified, audited and selected over 3,724 expert medical specialists, clinics, psychologists and dentists in the UK."

"We have created a 360-degree ecosystem designed to aid patients and doctors. For example, we are producing an app which allows patients to access their medical records. We also aid clinics and hospitals by advancing the digitalisation of the entire care process through the use of cutting-edge technology. This will increase productivity and efficiency, while also maximising the value of specialised services — from helping to reduce patient waiting times to providing them with technical support by connecting their management systems with our core technology."

Matching patients to the best specialist for them

Sardá explains: "All the technology we provide is aimed at ensuring the patient gets the right specialist, on the first time. So, on the one hand, our carefully selected specialists and their clinics and hospitals are able to promote their expertise through our portal. On the patient side, we provide clear, accurate information on the skills and expertise of the specialist, so the patient can make the best decision for themselves."

As part of their data service, Top Doctors collects objective information on the specialist's career, the services provided at medical centres and the level of excellence of hospitals — as well as, of course, compiling patient reviews. The site also facilitates online bookings, digital appointments and prescription services.

He adds that: "When someone searches for a specialist, they see — on average — three different specialists in order to get the complete pathology of their disease. In our case, 90% of the time, we find the perfect specialist for a patient the first time around." This reduces the level of uncertainty for the patient when choosing their medical service provider and saves vital time.

Rigorous recruitment of top specialists

Sardá details the rigorous selection process that means only one in five doctors are selected by his company. "We choose the very best clinics or specialists in each medical speciality by using a nomination process by other specialists. Their careers are thoroughly audited, based on their academic education and professional experience, and we also count on a medical advisory panel that will take action and review each case individually, in case there are doubtful candidates."

Over 250 million patients have entrusted Top Doctors to choose their medical specialists in Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Colombia and the United States.

Ahead of the curve in e-health revolution

Sardá believes the e-health 'future' has arrived a little early because of Covid-19. "Before Covid, we already believed our technology could allow patients to solve their problems from home, wherever possible," he explains. "During Covid, there was a huge increase in our teleconsultations. This meant we invested a lot in having a very big and solid platform that controls the whole patient journey." He concludes: "It is no longer possible to manage your healthcare exclusively offline. Every provider is therefore working to improve their online patient support. Patients, in return, want all the tools at their fingertips. And, of course, we feel that we have the best solutions for patients, specialists and health providers."

To learn more, visit **topdoctors.co.uk**