

Articles, News

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Looking at Major Healthcare Industry Trends in 2026



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While people have been living longer than ever before, the percentage of time in poor health has remained the same. The result is a larger number of people needing healthcare services of one form or another. According to McKinsey and Company, a global healthcare worker shortage of approximately 10 million people is anticipated by 2030. At the same time that the healthcare industry is expecting increasing labor shortages, many significant trends are underway.

Digital Technology Accelerates

While digital transformation is certainly the topic on everyone's mind in 2026, the healthcare industry in particular is laser-focused on new technology platforms, tools, and services. After lagging behind other industries, healthcare is now rushing to catch up. Fewer healthcare systems are depending on fax machines and hand-written forms. Those that do perform manual administrative tasks are utilizing digital technologies and other AI-enabled tools such as autonomous gen AI agents that require minimal human intervention for routine tasks.

In fact, Deloitte's 2025 Global Health Care Outlook concludes that digital transformation is the *single* issue most likely to impact health systems with 90% of C-suite healthcare leaders expecting digital technology use to further accelerate. And as C-suite healthcare leaders are focused on efficiency, productivity, and patient engagement, AI is considered to be a core element in driving efficiency and productivity.

Care is Anywhere and Everywhere

Covid changed consumer mindsets in every industry, and in healthcare, today patients expect "care anywhere." They are more tech-savvy, more informed, and more demanding than ever before. "Care anywhere" is based on a seamless patient journey and personalized content.

Consumers want easy access to patient portals from tablets, phones, and laptops. They want to be able to reach a physician for a tele-health visit from another country. Tele-health is a core component of delivering healthcare in 2026. In addition to improved patient convenience, tele-health results in a reduction in wait times, decreased travel time from rural areas, and overall greater satisfaction.

Wearable Health Monitoring is Expanding

Part of the "care anywhere" model also incorporates wearable health monitoring. The global market for wearable medical devices is growing rapidly as more patients are using their watches and fitness trackers to monitor their steps, their sleep, and even their stress. From Apple and Garmin smartwatches to Oura Smart smart rings to Abbott continuous glucose monitors, wearable health monitors are quickly evolving into daily essentials.

Wearables are also enabling doctors and hospitals to monitor patients remotely, which adds efficiencies and lowers costs. And, these devices are increasingly detecting sports and car accidents and alerting emergency contacts including medical professionals.

At the same time, in addition to concerns around issues such as accuracy of data, affordability, and battery life, healthcare care professionals and their patients are concerned about data sharing and privacy. Many patients are questioning what other parties have access to the data that is transmitted through health monitors including device manufacturers, app developers, advertisers, and insurance companies.

Cybersecurity is a Growing Concern

And, from an overall industry perspective, while digital transformation certainly results in efficiencies, it also increases the likelihood of cyberattacks. In 2025, in the United States, close to 300 cyberattacks occurred in hospitals, clinics, and other direct care providers. Australia, Germany, and the United Kingdom also experienced major cyberattacks. (Comparitech 2025) Healthcare cyberattacks cause significant patient care disruptions and among other side effects, impact staff workload and burnout.

Talent Shortages and Employee Value Proposition

"Following the global pandemic, across the globe, healthcare organizations are faced with employee burnout and significant hiring challenges," states Jamie Trainor, President Healthcare Division, IPL Health Staffing. In this environment, with many more demands on staff, increasingly, employees are seeking more support, more control over their schedules, the opportunity to develop their career skills, and recognition for their work. In addition to phased retirement, healthcare organizations are responding with restructuring care models through task-sharing and virtual and hybrid roles.

"Building a compelling employee value proposition is important in all industries today. But in healthcare, where the demands on talent are extraordinary, giving employees a sense of purpose and reward is critical to success," adds Mitch Berger, CEO, Howard-Sloan Executive Search and Managing Partner, IMSA Search Global Partners USA. "In any organization, having the right talent in place requires strategic thinking and smart management, but this is especially true in healthcare today."

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