

## The long road to fostering patient trust in AI



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AI's role in healthcare seems to increase by the day. More than helping manage workflows, the technology can potentially transform how healthcare is delivered and the way we think about medicine.

In what's fast becoming a more machine-led healthcare environment, there are people who remain unconvinced about putting their health in the hands of a machine. This is hardly surprising since health is our most valuable asset, thus entrusting it to a machine is a difficult decision for both patients and medical professionals responsible for looking after us.

It is clear therefore that healthcare AI faces this important challenge: how can it win the same level of trust as doctors. "When our experience in healthcare is focused on human care, being treated by machines will seem alien – how AI is implemented and how it interacts with patients is an issue that needs to be addressed," says Marcus Smith, managing director EMEA at Polecat, which is a leader in reputation intelligence.

Unlike doctors whose conduct is guided by the Hippocratic Oath, AI cannot pledge to act in our best interests and carry out best practice. The technology however can be subject to regulation and scrutiny, in the same way doctors are regulated and responsible for their actions. This is not an easy issue, Smith points out, considering that the distinction between whether culpability lies in the application or creation of the technology is not clear-cut.

"Regulation and legislation will be vitally important to reassure patients that the AI is part of a wider network which is human and ultimately responsible and accountable for what happens to them," explains Smith.

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Another issue confronting healthcare AI relates to patients' privacy. While doctors swear to keep patients' medical record private, they are not exposed to cyberattacks and are not controlled by a company. With data use now under greater regulatory scrutiny under GDPR and other data protection laws, Smith says there is still a tension when giving machines access to sensitive patient information. This is an issue that AI device manufacturers need to address.

In many countries, healthcare services are expensive and labour-intensive. Automation is necessary to drive down costs and improve operational efficiencies. The introduction of AI into stretched health services to allow medical staff to focus on caring for individuals is inevitable. As the technology becomes more sophisticated, medical professionals will increasingly rely on it.

As with other emerging technologies, Smith says, manufacturers need to argue the case for greater adoption of AI to all stakeholders – from patients, to health services and governments. Vendors must show a proven track record demonstrating that the technology is equal to, if not better than, human care – helping to deliver more accurate diagnoses and precise surgery.

"Constant communication, engagement and transparency around current issues such as culpability and privacy are essential, alongside monitoring for emerging debates as the technology and its applications advance. Only by proving safety and effectiveness in the long-term, will firms encourage acceptance and adoption," Smith adds.

Source: Medicaldevice-network.com  
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