

Uber Health and 5 more groundbreaking healthcare delivery ideas



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Healthcare in the U.S. is an industry that's ripe for innovation. From a convoluted insurance system to a complicated chain of care to a lack of price transparency, many factors combine to create a healthcare system that's slow, expensive, inefficient, and difficult to navigate.

But some companies are fast at work addressing the many pain points of patient care. Whether they're small start-ups or large companies we already know, there are plenty of businesses out there working to make a difference in the healthcare space. Below, we've rounded up six ideas that are changing how healthcare is delivered today.

Uber Health

Every year, 3.6 million Americans miss doctor appointments due to a lack of reliable transportation, contributing to a high rate of no-shows, reaching as much as 30 percent nationwide. At the beginning of March, troubled ride-share company Uber announced the launch of Uber Health, a new initiative that partners with healthcare organisations to provide reliable transportation to patients in need. Here's how it works: a coordinator schedules the Uber ride on behalf of the patient, and the patient communicates with the driver via text or call to facilitate the logistics.

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The HIPAA-compliant system helps reduce appointment cancellations and saves the healthcare organisation's money (as compared to using taxis or other transportation options). "Uber has helped us drastically reduce appointment cancellations. It's great to be able to quickly request a ride with so that in-need patients can make an appointment they'd otherwise miss," said Pete Celano, Director of Consumer Health Initiatives at MedStar Health, in the release announcing the nationwide launch of Uber Health.

Zocdoc Insurance Checker

Insurance is notoriously cryptic and confusing, and health insurance is even more difficult to decipher than other kinds of policies. How do you know what your health insurance will cover and what it won't? Can you be 100 percent certain that a new doctor is in your network? To answer these questions, the online medical scheduling platform Zocdoc launched their Insurance Checker at the very end of last year. Patients take a picture of their insurance card, then Zocdoc extracts the important data and determines whether or not a doctor is in-network under the patient's plan. This makes it easier for the patient to schedule visits and cuts down on surprise out-of-network charges.

Nomad Health

Have you ever been sick, only to discover that the earliest available appointment at your primary care physician's office is in two weeks? Instead of waiting, you can call up a doctor, speak to one within a few minutes, and get a diagnosis and even a prescription, all without leaving the

comfort of your home. While telemedicine has been around in some form or fashion for years (early leader Teladoc was founded in 2002), start-ups have recently jumped into the telemedicine space, hoping to provide a new twist on the concept of a virtual doctor visit.

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The start-up Nomad Health seeks to combine this telemedicine idea with the gig economy, allowing doctors to contract for virtual freelance via videoconferencing appointments. The service also includes postings for full-time positions, as well as travel nurse positions. Like employees in other industries, medical professionals are seeking more flexible and remote work schedules, and Nomad Health hopes to seamlessly connect them with these very opportunities while providing convenient video appointments for patients.

Osso VR

For decades, cadaver dissections have been the primary way of training surgical residents. But a host of new companies are using virtual reality (VR) technology to train future healthcare providers in a variety of situations. Osso VR, a start-up that closed \$2 million in funding last year, uses realistic simulations to teach orthopaedic surgeons new techniques. Unlike cadavers, which often can only be used once, surgeons can practice VR simulations over and over again until they achieve proficiency.

Not only does VR make it cheaper to train surgeons, it also means that patients are being operated on by more experienced residents who have performed dozens of simulations (rather than just a handful). "In med school, they say 'see one [surgery], do one, teach one'...but the truth is you need to do 50 to 100 cases for proficiency," Justin Barad, Osso VR CEO and Founder, told Forbes.

Google's Launchpad Studios

Google's new Launchpad Studios program matches machine learning start-ups with Silicon Valley experts — and the inaugural class of seven start-ups all focus on addressing healthcare and biotech problems using artificial intelligence. American and international start-ups Augmedix, Cytovale, Nanowear, Owkin, Portal Telemedicina, Byteflies, and BrainQ joined the effort.

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Each start-up seeks to use machine learning in a slightly different context; for example, BrainQ identifies brain wave patterns in patients after neurological disorders to help aid in treatment, while Nanowear uses nanosensors in smart textiles to gather patient data and improve diagnostics. Google plans to establish other tracks for Launchpad Studios, but the fact that the company chose healthcare and biotech to be the first one indicates that Google is prioritising healthcare innovation.

Looking ahead

The year is 2030. You check in at your doctor's office, and before you enter an exam room, you get a full body scan, and its data is fed to an AI algorithm that can spot patterns that might indicate health problems. By the time you make it to the exam room, your doctor has your data queued up, ready to review it with you and compare it to your genetic testing results. Before you leave, you're given a wearable that will continuously relay health data back to your provider.

Sound futuristic? This process is already happening at Forward, a new kind of doctor's office that has locations in Los Angeles and San Francisco. Not every doctor's appointment can be done virtually through telemedicine, and Forward wants to make sure that when you do go to visit your doctor in person, the experience is seamless and digitally integrated.

The future of health

These concepts are just a sampling of the many new start-ups and innovations in the healthcare space. The future of healthcare is fascinating, primarily because these thinkers are funneling their efforts into problem-solving solutions that make the healthcare system smarter, more user-friendly and better connected.

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