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# Reset 2021

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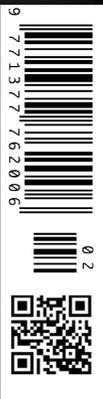
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# 2021 in Healthcare: Snowballing into the Future

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Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, digitalisation in healthcare has become as important as probably never before. Its upgraded role spans across a multitude of areas, from blockchain applications and smart hospitals to patient data protection and vaccine logistics. An expert provides an overview of the most promising trends and technologies meant to both disrupt and give a boost to healthcare in 2021.



## Key Points

- Without a doubt, development in healthcare and med-tech sector will continue to accelerate.
- The volume and application of data will keep expanding in parallel with the adoption of data protection frameworks. The two must be balanced to allow higher quality of patient care.
- Hospitals' operating models increasingly become outdated. The focus is shifting towards prevention and non-hospital settings. This will be accelerated by predictive AI.
- 2021 will be a breakthrough year for blockchain, which promises to become widespread and standard technology in healthcare.
- Telehealth, which received a major boost during the pandemic, will continue to grow, although the threat of 'Uberisation' persists. This may also change patients' perception of the value of their data.
- The vaccine rollout has been challenged in logistics and distribution, but created an opportunity to enter the field for non-healthcare companies

## Where Do We Go from Here?

2020 has been quite a ride for the planet. But despite all the hopes we envision for 2021, this year is telling us that we might have to be a bit more patient. 2021 still tastes a little bit like 2020.

We don't need a crystal ball to see that last year's acceleration in the healthcare and med-tech sector will clearly continue to rapidly develop. Let us review a few of the areas that are worth paying attention to, and that will probably bring new and better solutions in the upcoming months.

### Data Rocks!

Personal healthcare data will become the key to unlock healthcare's previous burdens. Data will not only continue to expand but also their legal protection will slowly become widespread. Spearhead regulation like the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is driving many

other legislations to follow suit. The GDPR (also known as 'HIPAA on steroids') and healthcare data have been put to the test multiple times in the last few months, especially with the application of contact tracing mobile applications, setting a trend for the market.

The equilibrium between data privacy and market expansion will be key to improving the quality of patient care. This new paradigm – collection, treatment, as well as an ethical and transparent exploitation of data – will help the sector reinforce some struggling national healthcare systems that have been underperforming or inefficient in the last few years.

### Towards Smart Hospitals

Hospitals and their caregivers, on the front line since the beginning of this COVID-19 crisis, have been subject to continuous stress. It's clear that the future functioning of

hospitals will have to be revised. There is an open market opportunity to guide, advise, treat and manage patients before they enter the hospital. This will be accelerated by predictive AI that will help with performing intelligence triage, optimisation, length of hospitalisation, setting priorities and smart scheduling functions depending on urgencies, availabilities and specialisations. Hospitals will probably expand with different peripheral services through existing intermediaries such as pharmacies, nurse offices, or telehealth hubs.

### New Chains on the Block

Blockchain will make its grand entrance this year, by becoming a traditional and standard technology, differentiating itself from its 'estranged' cousin, Bitcoin. Blockchain

### Last-mile Delivery & Logistics for Vaccines

The rollout of COVID-19 vaccines has been greeted with joy and hope. However, as we thought, the effective mass production and logistics has been confronted with the reality of actual distribution. At the same time, we've seen that Amazon has offered help to administer vaccines in their facilities. This proposal, coming from the e-commerce giant, could also be shared and replicated by other players like Walmart or Costco - in the U.S., but think of your national leader retail chain. This move will not only multiply the chances of faster and effective distribution, but also introduce a new way, in which users set up a relationship with these companies.

2021 had the potential to become an easy-going and hopeful year, but it seems that it will take a bit longer to

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will be used in clinical trials to make them more transparent, allowing faster and more efficient processes. E-prescriptions and secure and integrated transactions will continue to grow using this technology, and 'health passports' could also benefit from blockchain in the future months of COVID-19 management.

### Telehealthier. Patient Care 4.0

Telehealth will represent more than half of consultations. Telehealth and digital consultation-linked activities will certainly boom this year. Patients have realised that distant consultations are no longer taboo, and that in COVID-19 times they have proven to be sufficient for a large part of consultations or follow-ups. The expansion of related applications to telehealth will also surface, in an intention to recreate a previously empty territory.

Generalised digitalisation of these services will also have an impact in the more traditional pharmaceutical sector, such as in pharmacies, primary care offices, dispensaries, or vaccine rooms. There is certainly a limit: the potential 'Uberisation of healthcare', which could lead to a degradation of basic services.

In the face of the pandemic (and the post-corona scenario) users might begin to perceive their health data differently. User data monetisation is not (yet) an alternative, but the realisation of data sharing capabilities is, including those sourced by connected devices, IoT and centralised electronic medical records by national authorities (e.g. France's 'Dossier Medical Partagé').

experience that feeling. Nevertheless, we're sure that this year will bring surprises, good surprises. This year will also bring long-awaited advances on data interoperability, uniformisation of electronic medical records, AI-assisted drug discovery and more. So much to look forward to.

### Conflict of Interest

None. ■