

How data is shaping the future of healthcare



COVID-19 has propelled the rise of digitalisation - but how can our personal data help to improve patient outcomes today and shape the future of healthcare tomorrow?



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The last year has seen a staggering 6,500% increase¹ in the number of healthcare professionals recommending digital health tools to their patients; 99% of GP surgeries have moved to offer video consultations; and over four million people have downloaded the ZOE COVID Symptom Study app to actively share their symptoms in real time.²

Those who may have given little thought to the value of their own health data previously, are now seeing its power first-hand in the fight against COVID-19. This information has helped to identify patterns and trends, highlight at-risk populations and inform the Government's response. As we look ahead, data is already establishing itself as a core driver in shaping the future of healthcare.

While this rise in public awareness is hugely beneficial, there is still much to be done to help people understand why their personal health data is so vital and importantly, provide assurances regarding how it will be used and what safeguarding and governance measures are in place.

Data security

Arguably, there is no sector that better understands the need for transparency than the healthcare industry, where there are clear parallels between protecting patients and their data. Safety will always be our watchword; the challenge is therefore not so much in the doing, but in showing how and why it is being done.

Digital literacy can be addressed through improved access and education, but trust is a far trickier commodity. It takes time to build confidence and this can only truly be achieved through transparent practices and consistent delivery. The way that we use health data is key - it must be unfailingly ethical and highly respectful of an individual's privacy.



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Connecting the data points

While personal health apps, clinical studies and electronic health records (EHRs) are very useful, hurdles often lie in the lack of interoperability between the data holding systems, and the fact that data collection isn't standardised. Nonetheless, these factors have not impaired the benefits

that data is already demonstrating in healthcare. We see a breadth of positive adaptations already appearing through personalisation, accessibility and immersive technologies aiding patient care. This should only increase with time and expand to positively impact patients, healthcare delivery and the economy as we follow this data movement.

Last month the Government unveiled a project that will focus on more efficient and safe uses of health data for research and analysis.³ At Janssen, the Pharmaceutical Companies of Johnson & Johnson, we're already partnering on programmes to help tackle this, including a Europe-wide collaboration with the Innovative Medicines Initiative, aiming to increase access to quality real-world data by finding ways to reduce the variables in study design and data analysis. We're also leading on the European Health Data and Evidence Network project, which seeks to harmonise an impressive ~100 million EHRs into a large-scale useable network.



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What's next?

COVID-19 has ignited a revolutionary approach to healthcare and provided opportunities to harness the value of data like never before.

At Janssen, we are embarking on a digital transformation journey to accelerate our capabilities in this space. Building on our partnerships and expertise to ensure that the data patients entrust to us can be used to genuinely advance healthcare - from the development of innovative therapies to the delivery of patient care.

That said, it is the responsibility of the Government and industry alike to nurture public trust in the value of health data and digitalisation. Only by doing so will we build towards a healthcare system that is resilient enough to meet our needs today and flexible enough to face tomorrow.

References

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