



Top transformational digital health trends to track in 2023

Driving digital transformation has never been more important

By Jean Laurent Poitou, Arpita Singhal, and Karim Benhameurlaine

The pandemic accelerated the recognition that many healthcare related activities could be digitised, driving the convergence of several trends in the healthcare industry – notable shifts include consumers prioritising convenience and access to care. Simultaneously we are seeing companies strategising and rethinking their digital planning to fundamentally transform their relationship with consumers as well as businesses. Previously, there was a lot of hype around digital prototypes and now we are seeing investments into advanced analytics at scale to anticipate events before they happen.

Driving digital transformation has never been more important as many leading healthcare providers look to become more consumer-friendly while simultaneously changing their operations, culture, and use of technology. Below are some of the transformational trends that will continue

to drive growth in the healthcare industry both globally and across the Middle East region.

Growing role of AI in telehealth

Telehealth has quickly gained itself a reputation as an effective solution to help achieve the goal of universal health coverage. The application of artificial intelligence (AI) in telehealth to allow doctors to make real-time, data-driven rich choices is a key component in generating a better patient experience and improved health outcomes. AI is today helping clinical research (digital twins of anything from molecules to body parts allowing simulated impact of treatments) to enhanced diagnosis (e.g., computer vision on scans to identify tumours), analysing large amounts of data and early diagnostics to the automation of processes and benchmarking of medical practices. We see strong uptake, favourable consumer perception, and tangible investment into the telehealth space which is contributing to its continued growth.

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“Quantified self” has the potential to improve outcomes

Globally, we have noted that devices have become firmly established in mainstream culture. As such, we can anticipate their effectiveness in improving diagnostics, personal medication, and digital treatment in the Middle East as well. Wearables including smart devices and fitness trackers bring immense value in capturing health data, and with all the advancements in technology taking place across the region, they are set to play a huge role. The “quantified self” has embraced prevention and is devoting time, energy, and money to staying healthy, including using regulated and validated health apps and wearables. Quantified self-data has the potential to drastically improve the outcome of treatments and medications as it drives digital interactions.

Digital tools are revolutionising mental health

The pandemic triggered an increase in mental stress and depression related challenges, thus putting a spotlight on the value digital and virtual healthcare can provide to the mental health space, and by doing so might have thrown a lifeline to our mental health system. Today, patients can more easily and efficiently interact with practitioners online. This virtual exchange has improved dramatically because of the increasing array of specialised digital solutions available. The magic of teletherapy platforms such as chatbots, videos, gamified user exercises and digital cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) programs, have been good adjunct to clinician-based virtual care, allowing 24/7 access for those who suffer from similar and sometimes taboo mental health challenges.

We are seeing surging investments into digital platforms that are challenging the age-old established practices and shaping the future of mental healthcare through digital mental health solutions. Another important advantage is lower administration and cost effectiveness, personalised care, and more digitally enhanced patient journeys - that can play a key role in driving lower waiting times - and enabling doctors to have a more direct access to patient records; this is something the industry has talked about a lot but is now coming of age.

Compliance to digital health

There is a huge focus on compliance with digital products and solutions and this extends to their environmental impact. Most health tech solutions are now designed with ESG compliance in mind. Rigorous measures from all players in the digital healthcare ecosystem are needed to ensure adherence. Increasing attention to ESG issues

will continue to serve as catalyst for growth, highlighting societal health issues like mental health and the role that digital health applications can play to improve patients’ lives. For investors, it will become paramount to include digital health into their screening radar and to decide on their investment strategy regarding digital health.

Investments in healthtech aimed at creating stronger operational synergies

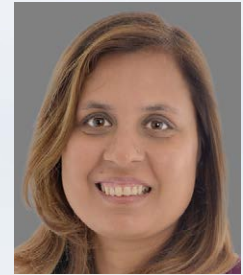
In the last couple of years, with the rise of adoption of digital health tech, there has been a rise in investments in various start-ups offering variety of health solutions. As we come out of the pandemic, we see the demand and utilisation of some of these companies come down thereby impacting the valuations. Companies that offer a platform with options to have multiple solutions instead of single solution are more attractive for investors for their longer-term value. With very strong valuations, the only way for a start-up to reach the next stage of development is through an exit being acquired by a PE or going public (IPO); as these two options are tougher in today’s environment, corporates are now able to buy these start-ups and integrate them, creating more opportunities for “industrial synergies” as the reason corporates acquire other firms is to combine them with their core business.

Moving into 2023, we expect strong investment to continue as healthcare companies will require enough technology backbone to cater to a wider audience and expand their offerings beyond general practitioner to include other chronic illnesses. 🌸

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