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Clinicians: ‘Show Me The Impact And Outcomes Of AI Tools’

Health Sector Leaders Are Gaining Increased Awareness Of AI’s Role In Bridging The Gaps To Sustainable Health Care

by **Ashley Yeo**

Royal Philips’ ninth annual Future Health Index global report reveals a growing acceptance by clinicians and health care stakeholders of virtual care and AI-enabled innovation. These tools can address workforce shortages, financial burdens and growing demand for care, said chief innovation and strategy officer Shez Partovi.

“Better care for more people” is the title *Royal Philips* has given to its latest global compilation and analysis of health care stakeholder views on the pressure points and technology adoption trends clinicians and providers are witnessing in the delivery of care locally and nationally.

The ninth annual Future Health Index (FHI) shows the evolution of care in a sector that is under mounting demand strains and shifting increasingly to care outside the hospital. The report claims that, more than ever, in 2024 clinicians are ready to adopt artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual care tools to help them meet growing, evolving demand.

Shez Partovi, Philips’ chief innovation and strategy officer and chief business leader for enterprise informatics, noted a shift in clinician attitudes in favor of AI and virtual care technologies. Speaking to *In Vivo* ahead of the health innovation conference HLTH Europe 2024, Partovi said physicians and care providers are unlocking the value of AI.

“They are beginning to understand that AI it is critical for assessing staff shortages, offering automation and keeping health care systems sustainable in the face of growing patient demand,”



SHEZ PARTOVI ' CLINICIANS SEEING MEANINGFUL DIFFERENCE FROM AI'

he said. “It turns the tsunami of data into insights such that clinicians are beginning to see evidence that this is going to be meaningful and different for them.”

AI has validity here, Partovi said. Digitization of medicine across the world generates a wealth of data from which clinicians want the precise insights to help decide courses of action. AI crunches the numbers, looks at large data sets for meaning and thereby bridges the insights gap by advancing care – and reducing costs at the same time.

FHI 2024 reveals the extent to which health care leaders have already implemented AI for clinical decision support across different areas of the hospital, with in-hospital patient monitoring, medication management, treatment planning, radiology and

preventative care leading the pack.

And as health care leaders expand care beyond the hospital’s walls, implementing AI in remote patient monitoring becomes a key area of focus. Around 70% of survey respondents said they had implemented AI-enabled care or would do so in the next three years.

Automation Allows Staff To Avoid Repetitive And low-Level Tasks

AI can automate processes and relieve staff of tasks that they do not want to and do not need to do, Partovi explained. Misconceptions they had tend to fade when the full value of automation and insights begins to emerge. Erstwhile fears have eroded as health leaders have seen the proof that AI makes their jobs easier and better.

Philips’ annual FHIs have tracked changing sentiment regarding about the priority needs and trends in health care every year since 2016. The 2024 report, sampling the views of 2,800 health care leaders in 14 countries, illustrates that users realize how automating workflows frees up staff’s time and reduces waiting lists, and the role of remote patient monitoring in extending the reach of care.

The report reveals that 92% of health care leaders surveyed see automation of repetitive tasks and processes as critical for addressing staff shortages. With automation of workflow optimization, medication management, clinical data entry, billing and scheduling appointments, staff are more likely to be able to work to the highest level of their certification.

With staff burnout and staff shortages top of priorities agenda, provider systems are reaching for

technology as the solution. 89% of leaders reported positive impacts from virtual care in easing staff shortages. Technology that enables algorithmic management of patients remotely and provides a way of managing patients without physical staff and escalating, if needed, is one answer.

But a one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate or practical for providers, and which level of automation, AI-enabled care or virtual care adopted depends on each health care operation's needs and capabilities, Partovi cautioned. Some operational automation is low risk, and some is highly regulated, high risk, for example.

'Show Me The Benefit'

"These are not revolutionary ideas," Partovi said. "I see the change as evolutionary. But clinicians are evidence-driven and believe in being shown proof before they 'lean in' and adopt." And while they are showing increasing readiness to adopt, they are also clear that automation and AI processes must have impact and be outcomes focused.

Accordingly, 65% of health care leaders (and 77% of radiology leaders) say their health care professional (HCP) staff are skeptical about the use of automation. HCPs raise issues of quality assurance and validation, and fears about over reliance.

Partovi added another nuance, noting that while clinicians are, as said, evidence-driven by nature, many have experienced being let down by technology which has under-delivered for their

Future Health Index 2024

Considerations about the ethical, sustainable, affordable effects of health care transformation come through clearly in Philips' ninth Future Health Index global survey of 2,800 health care leaders. The quantitative and qualitative survey was compiled in 2023-24.

The collective responses paint a picture of an industry transitioning concertedly to AI-enabled care yet reflect residual concerns among pockets of clinicians and physicians whose key demand is: "Show me the impact and the outcomes" on patients and finances.

Philips views FHI as a tool for discussions with health care stakeholders and clients, bearing in mind the 2024 findings showing health care leaders' prime concerns about:

- Potential burnout, stress and mental issues among staff (two thirds of health care leaders agreed on this)
- Patients travelling too far for necessary care (50%)
- Staff spending too much time integrating data results rather than caring for patients
- Financial challenges that are limiting resources and lengthening waiting times, resulting in treatments being offered more selectively (81%) and/or hampering scope to invest in new technology (59%).

needs.

Now, however, they now realize the need for solutions for staffing shortages, aging populations, a necessary step-up in tools for chronic disease management and medication adherence, among other things. “They’re thinking: ‘I need help.’ It’s our job to provide it,” Partovi said.

Philips chief strategy officer has first-hand insight of such matters. As a physician for 12 years prior to joining Philips, he is aware that “any kind of revolution in medicine is hard”. In today’s system, methodical application with evidence is required to achieve impact. Ethical sustainability and affordability/reduced cost are the other criteria that drive HCPs.

A clear survey finding was that automation must support HCPs in their tasks and not replace their professional judgement.

Happily, the media hype over AI replacing physicians and the number of jobs that generative AI will replace has waned. Partovi said: “There is an education curve to overcome regarding ChatGPT misconceptions, but the survey shows there is increased awareness of this.” An aggregate 85% of health care leaders already – or plan to – invest in generative AI within the next three years.

Mere Operational Adjustments Will Not Meet Evolving Needs

In the current era of high demand for quality care, staff issues and cost pressures, “we can’t streamline or cost-cut our way out of this.”

So how do providers ensure access to care when there is a paucity of clinicians? Eighty-nine

Health care leaders see better care being delivered through data, specifically identifying its potential for:

- Optimizing care pathways (43%), implementing evidence-based practice (37%) and reducing waiting lists for diagnostic and elective procedures (36%).

AI in remote patient monitoring is an area of focus for the next three years as health care leaders increasingly focus on expanding care beyond the hospital’s walls. In the meantime, around 70% of health care leaders say AI is already being used for clinical decision support (CDS) – or will be in the next three years – for:

- Remote and inpatient monitoring
- Preventive care
- Pathology
- Radiology
- Treatment planning, medication management and “clinical command centers.”

percent said virtualization of care will become more important when demand rises and supply cannot keep up, given the staff shortages and that not every patient is in proximity to an available physician.

It is clear the tools to tackle the problems ahead have to change. While some clinicians and health care leaders are concerned that AI-enabled care and automation may not be as they expected, the evidence of increasing adoption is promising, Partovi said.