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Healthcare AI

The critical importance of keeping patients front and center in the healthcare IT space

Diana Nole | Executive Vice President & General Manager, Healthcare Division

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The healthcare IT space is booming, and innovation is accelerating. But innovation for innovation's sake cannot improve healthcare experiences and outcomes if it doesn't empower physicians and help people live longer, healthier lives. Healthcare IT developers must keep patients front and center throughout the innovation process. They can do this by creating solutions that blend seamlessly and securely into the fabric of daily life and enhance doctor-patient interactions, augment clinical abilities, and strengthen human connections.

Healthcare systems need technology to help address burnout, capture appropriate reimbursement, and support telehealth efforts. Accordingly, developers large and small are clamoring to capture a share of a healthcare IT market expected to top $390 billion by 2024. The field is rife with innovation, opportunity, and promises of enabling healthcare organizations to do more with less.

When I joined Nuance in June, I was already familiar with the company's decades-long track record of innovating AI-powered, speech-driven solutions for healthcare providers. But more than that, I was familiar with how those innovations consistently prioritize humanity – the human element that is central to quality care and essential for creating positive patient experiences.

Patients front and center

Prioritizing the patient experience requires a dedicated focus on finding new ways to engage people in their own healthcare journeys and empowering doctors so they can practice the art of medicine. While that concept seems straightforward, the inherent complexities of healthcare regulations and associated administrative burdens often unintentionally hamper that effort. Laptops, keyboards, hundreds of clicks, and minutes of awkward silence – or worse yet, the one-sided conversation while your doctor is intently scrolling through endless screens to adhere to various regulatory mandates – have created a physical, emotional, and mental barrier between patients and clinicians. The result is de-personalized patient experience, physician burnout, and diminished trust.

The situation is untenable – but fixable. It is up to us, as leaders, technologists, and innovators, to use advancements in AI to design solutions that remove administrative burdens from clinicians, engage patients, and strengthen the doctor-patient relationship.

The surge in healthcare innovation comes at a time when the majority of patients think that technology can keep them better connected with healthcare providers and their own care. Additionally, we see the increasing consumerization of healthcare. The expectations we have all developed as digital consumers are now clearly mapping onto how we think about our own healthcare, the services we receive, and how we engage with healthcare providers. Patients are looking for more transparency on costs, treatments, wait times, physician ratings, the friendliness of office staff, and clinical outcomes. The faster that technology innovators can increase transparency and engagement and make healthcare IT more user-friendly for doctors and patients alike, the faster we can alleviate the strains and frustrations, elevate trust, and improve care and financial outcomes. That is why I joined Nuance.

The Hippocratic Oath calls on doctors to do everything in their power to care for patients. It reminds clinicians that medicine is an art as well as a science, and that warmth, sympathy, and understanding can be more important than procedures or prescriptions. The Oath also explicitly states the importance of patient privacy. It's incumbent on us as technology leaders and innovators to make the same level of commitment to physicians and their patients with solutions that are technically superior, that prioritize the human elements of healthcare, and that have clear, demonstrable mechanisms for privacy protection and informed consent. That all starts with keeping the patient front and center.

Tags: Patient safety, Future of healthcare, Helping others

About Diana Nole

Diana joined Nuance in June 2020 as the executive vice president and general manager of Nuance's Healthcare division, which is focused on improving the overall physician-patient experience through cutting-edge AI technology applications. She is responsible for all business operations, growth and innovation strategy, product development, and partner and customer relationships. Over the course of her career, Diana has held numerous executive and leadership roles, serving as the CEO of Wolter Kluwers' Healthcare division, president of Carestream's Digital Medical Solutions business, and vice president of strategy, product management, and marketing for Eastman Kodak's Healthcare Information Technology Solutions business. Diana has dual degrees in Computer Science and Math from the State University of New York at Potsdam and earned her MBA from the University of Rochester's Simon School.

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