Closing the digital health disconnect: A blueprint for optimizing digitally enabled care

About the study

Since 2010, there has been over $100 billion of venture funding invested in digital health companies. Yet despite this growth and the desire from patients and physicians for progress to continue, the health care system still struggles to address the ongoing health care challenges of access, quality, outcomes, affordability and equity, even with the introduction of new digital health tools. This chasm between the transformative potential of digital health and the reality of its impact today is the "digital health disconnect."

With this disconnect in mind, we’ve now entered an era of digitally enabled care—fully integrated in-person and virtual care models that hybridize care delivery based on clinical appropriateness and other factors such as convenience and cost—that is transforming how we think about accessing, providing, managing and paying for health care. Realizing the full potential of digitally enabled care will require fundamentally rethinking how care models are designed, implemented and scaled to solve for many of the challenges of today’s health care system.

The Future of Health Report (PDF) was prepared by the American Medical Association (AMA) and Manatt Health and builds off of the AMA’s Return on Health research. The report explores and defines this digital health disconnect, offers a blueprint to optimize digitally enabled care and shares stakeholder opportunities to leverage digital care through case examples from various organizations. Input from dozens of experts representing a range of stakeholders was collected, including a variety of case examples on how organizations have implemented care models that leverage digital care.

Key takeaways

The Future of Health research creates a blueprint to optimize digitally enabled care and address the digital health disconnect consisting of several foundational pillars and opportunities for stakeholders.
To create this blueprint, the AMA and Manatt Health conducted interviews and gathered feedback from more than 40 health care leaders from physician practices, health systems, digital health companies, venture funds, employers and health plans to understand their perspectives on digitally enabled care and the digital health disconnect.

**Foundational pillars**
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<th>SHAREHOLDER OPPORTUNITIES</th>
<th>FOUNDATIONAL PILLARS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Physicians</td>
<td>Build for patients, physicians and clinicians</td>
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<td>Health plans</td>
<td>Design with an equity lens</td>
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<td>Employers</td>
<td>Recenter care around the patient-physician relationship</td>
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<td>Policy makers</td>
<td>Improve and adopt payment models that incentivize high-value care</td>
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<td>Health tech companies</td>
<td>Create technologies and policies that reduce fragmentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Venture capital and private equity funds</td>
<td>Scale evidence-based models quickly</td>
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**Physicians**
Implement workflow tools that create efficiency and optimize care; participate in technology design and implementation; connect with peers; optimize EHRs; partner to extend capabilities

**Health plans**
Evaluate effectiveness of new models; offer equitable payment; better design value-based payment (VBP); enable equitable cost sharing to in-person services; require information sharing with members’ primary care physicians (PCPs); simplify administrative burden

**Employers**
Incentivize employee relationships with PCPs; require information sharing with employees’ PCPs and adherence to quality metrics; develop multicondition platforms; create on-site virtual care environments

**Policy makers**
Permanently extend telehealth flexibilities; increase broadband and effectiveness research funding; strengthen interoperability; support equitable coverage and payment of telehealth services

**Health tech companies**
Seek patient and provider input; center designs in health equity; simplify provider workflows; incorporate “privacy by design”; improve coordination with other providers

**Venture capital and private equity funds**
Direct investments to companies that work with incumbents to help ensure coordination of care and reduced fragmentation, address needs of vulnerable populations and perform efficacy research of their products
Join us

The AMA is committed to continuing to develop resources and insights, advocate for policy changes that support the future of health, and bring diverse perspectives across the industry to the table to keep building on this work. Join us by expressing your interest to commit to the pillars outlined in the blueprint and to participate in the following:

- Identify and showcase effective case studies and best practices across specialties, practice settings and stakeholders.
- Co-develop a common vocabulary for digitally enabled care to help ensure alignment and to avoid adding complexity.
- Share opportunities, best practices and learnings for how digitally enabled care can address workforce issues and industry-wide burnout through AMA convened efforts, pilots and organized (virtual and in-person) learning collaboratives.
- Collaborate to provide education on the approaches, outcomes and impact based on specialty, use case and patient population needs.
- Commit to the principles of equity and innovation recently released by In Full Health.
- Help ensure that the physician-patient relationship continues as the "heart and soul" of medicine and support physician-led team-based care.
- Collaborate on aligned advocacy efforts focused on addressing industry fragmentation, payment reform and advancing digitally enabled care.