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KEY TRENDS IN HEALTH

FEBRUARY 2025

The 2024 Milken Institute Future of Health Summit centered on the theme *Partnering for Better Health*. The two-day event featured more than 200 speakers across diverse industries and sectors in more than 50 sessions about innovative partnerships, targeted research, best practices, and policy priorities emerging from biomedical innovation, public health, food, healthy aging, and strategic philanthropy.

This brief summarizes the key trends, ideas, and solutions discussed at the Milken Institute Future of Health Summit.

The Pivot from Sick Care to Well Care

A theme that permeated nearly every discussion at the Summit was moving the health system toward a preventive-health-care model that focuses on keeping people healthy, detects disease early, and acknowledges that an individual's health is affected by factors outside the four walls of a health-care provider's office. Despite the challenges to adopting a preventive model in a system that is built around providing care for the ill, many still saw an opportunity to optimize within the current system by leveraging data to identify those at the highest risk for disease and engaging people before they walk in the front door of a health-care provider by addressing social factors that affect health (such as food and housing). Success stories like the Healthy Opportunities Pilot in North Carolina offer a potential model for moving forward. Community partnerships, such as the long-standing partnership between the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and YMCA on diabetes prevention, also offer a potential path in which the unique position of community-based organizations is elevated to advance health.

View relevant Future of Health Summit panels:

- [All Hands on Deck: Partnering for Prevention](#)
- [A Conversation with Former CDC Director Mandy Cohen](#)
- [Partnerships Leading to a Healthier Tomorrow](#)
- [Putting Value into Health Care](#)

Personalized Medicine Is Within Reach...

“Precision health,” “precision medicine,” “precision prevention,” and “precision early detection” are some of the terms of the same theme that were heard regularly from the Summit stage. For many experts, the personalization of health care is within sight. Genomic, clinical, claims, patient- and consumer-generated data, and technology like AI are successfully being used to identify patterns that inform care delivery and biomedical research decisions today. At the same time, experts cautioned that the benefits of these insights will not reach all patients unless there is an intentional effort to improve data collection. In particular, the absence of large swathes of the population in the datasets underpinning the tools in use today was highlighted as a major impediment to achieving personalized medicine at scale.

View relevant Future of Health Summit panels:

- [A Glimpse Ahead: The Future of R&D](#)
- [Bot or Not?: AI in Health Care](#)
- [Data Sets That Address All Our Diversity](#)
- [Innovation for All: Strategies Maximizing Impact](#)
- [The Future of Health: What Comes Next](#)
- [Why Younger People Are Getting Cancer and What We Can Do About It](#)

...But Is the Ecosystem Ready?

As science and technology rapidly progress, the rest of the ecosystem is lagging. Advances in science and technology can only benefit society if they can reach the people they are intended to help. Experts called out the lack of innovation in financing and payment systems, which are still built around traditional medicines and technologies, and issued a call to action for more collaborative thinking in this area.

In contrast, clinical trials were highlighted as an area that needs updating but in which progress is being made. Clinical trials remain expensive to conduct and do not necessarily generate the information that is needed in the real world. But a concerted focus to make clinical trials more effective and efficient has led to collaborative efforts to make them more accessible and available to people by conducting them beyond academic centers and exploring innovative clinical trial designs.

View relevant Future of Health Summit panels:

- [A Conversation with Former CMS Director of Medicare Meena Seshamani](#)
- [A Conversation with Former FDA Commissioner Robert Califf](#)
- [How Can Clinical Trials Keep Pace with Science?](#)
- [Putting Value into Health Care](#)
- [The Price of Health](#)
- [Unlocking the Policy Agenda for NextGen Biomedical Innovation](#)

Getting to the Next Level of Patient Partnerships

The question of how to further systematize patient engagement in the health system was raised in several sessions. A lack of understanding of the value that patient advocates can provide and an underestimation of their technical sophistication remain pervasive. Yet, those who systematically engage patients in drug development report seeing measurable returns on that engagement, from shorter development timelines to access to patient preference and other qualitative datasets that inform strategy. Solutions to achieve deeper partnerships with patients included greater information sharing across and within organizations to reduce the burden on patients. Patient advocates also urged moving beyond using umbrella terms like patient engagement, which can lead not only to tokenism but also to misalignment of expectations, as the term may carry different meanings and be assigned different values (and therefore different metrics) based on the stakeholder.

View relevant Future of Health Summit panels:

- [Beyond Checkboxes: Elevating Diversity and Representativeness in Patient Engagement](#)
- [Drafting the Blueprint for the Next Era of Patient Engagement](#)

Healthy Aging Continues to Grow in Focus

As the global population ages, there is increasing focus on the social determinants of health and ways to integrate clinical care with community-based interventions that support physical, cognitive, and social well-being for healthy aging. Developing national, state, and local plans to address the diverse needs of the growing older adult population goes beyond government to include public-private partnerships that maximize resources and impact for patients, their caregivers, and health-care providers.

Specific to brain health, there is an increased focus on preventive measures that reduce risk factors, such as depression and poor-quality sleep. Diagnostic tools for early detection of Alzheimer's disease and dementia have improved, allowing more time for patients and their loved ones to prepare for the full onset of the health issue. Advancements in treatments have led to improvements in quality of life and extended life span. Data are needed to detect, track, and analyze brain health. Opportunities exist to improve health-care system infrastructure and incentivize quality brain-health-care delivery.

View relevant Future of Health Summit panels:

- [Brain Check: Innovations in Prevention, Detection, and Intervention for Neurodegenerative Disease](#)
- [What's Next in Aging: Leveraging Plans and Progress to Meet the Moment](#)

Food as Health

To address nutrition security and advance Food Is Medicine further into health care, cross-sectoral partnerships are needed across health care, retailers, food producers, nonprofits, and government programs. Organizations and health-care providers are increasingly screening for social determinants of health and nutrition insecurity, and food interventions can address these needs and improve health outcomes. Research, evidence, and data can accelerate investment in nutrition security and Food Is Medicine solutions, yet gaps in data infrastructure and interoperability remain a challenge for large-scale implementation and integration.

Despite challenges with workflow and payment, there is enthusiasm for public-private partnerships among health-care providers and food producers. For example, growers and health-care systems can partner to offer Food Is Medicine programs.

These partnerships provide a market for local farmers and support local economies and communities. Health-care systems can partner with and refer to community organizations to provide supplemental care for members. Nonprofits and community-based organizations have knowledge of local community needs and can engage and connect people to appropriate resources, including food, throughout the year and during emergencies. Retailers work with pharmacies, whether in-house or external, to assist with screenings, nutrition services, and referrals to programs that support access to nutritious food. Retailers are also working to create nutrition guidance systems to inform consumers' shopping habits and provide greater insight into health outcomes and cost of care.

View a relevant Future of Health Summit panel:

- [Food as Engagement: Implications for Health and Access to Care](#)

Improving Women's Health

Advances have been made to improve women's health, but data show that there is continued and persistent underinvestment in research across many disease conditions that affect women differently, uniquely, and disproportionately. With initiatives from the Biden administration spurring research and innovation and the elevated role of both the public and private sectors in research, ensuring that the results from research are effectively integrated into access and care delivery is crucial.

Technology has the potential to close the gap, as apps and other trackers allow women to take their health into their own hands. However, it is critically important to protect private data not covered by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. Employer-sponsored care is broadening access to treatments, such as IVF and other aspects of fertility, that historically were paid for out of pocket. Accessibility and affordability remain top priorities for advancing and improving women's health outcomes.

View relevant Future of Health Summit panels:

- [A Conversation with Carolyn Mazure, Chair, Women's Health Research, The White House](#)
- [Connecting the Dots for Women's Health: Research Innovation, Access, and Care](#)
- [Global Collaboration to Eradicate Women's Cancers](#)

Employers Advancing Health in the Workplace

Employers across industries and sectors are investing in whole-person health approaches in the workplace, encouraging openness and support for previously taboo topics like caregiving, mental health, and other personal stressors that impact performance at work. This presents an opportunity for employers to lead with empathy, build trust, foster community and belonging, and destigmatize conversations and actions at work. Workplaces that allow and encourage employees to acknowledge the other aspects of their lives see a more engaged, resilient, and connected workforce, which in turn increases performance and retention. Overall, this approach benefits the employee, business, and surrounding community.

View a relevant Future of Health Summit panel:

- [Bringing Whole-Person Health to the Workplace](#)

Shaping a Resilient Pharma Supply Chain

Diverse public- and private-sector stakeholders are working together to strengthen the pharmaceutical supply chain and ensure patients have access to the medicines they need. To prevent drug shortages, these strategic partners are rethinking incentives for quality, efficiency, and diversification. For example, incentives could be offered to build and upskill the workforce, move manufacturing to the United States rather than a lower-cost environment, and value availability as much as price and quality. Efforts are underway to build redundancies into the national stockpile and bolster surge capacity into the workforce and manufacturing sites to rely on during shortages. Patients must be centered in the pharmaceutical supply chain discussions to ensure equitable access to therapies.

View a relevant Future of Health Summit panel:

- [How Pharmaceutical Supply Chain Advancements Are Meeting the Moment and Beyond](#)

The Future of Health Summit highlights the critical need to accelerate a shift of our health-care systems toward prevention and early detection so that individuals and communities can lead healthier, more productive lives. The issues we face have no easy answers, but together in partnership, we can make progress. The time to act is now.

[Watch all public panels from the Future of Health Summit on demand.](#)

About Us

The **Milken Institute** is a nonprofit, nonpartisan global think tank focused on accelerating measurable progress on the path to a meaningful life. With a focus on financial, physical, mental, and environmental health, we bring together the best ideas and innovative resourcing to develop blueprints for tackling some of our most critical global issues through the lens of what's pressing now and what's coming next.

Milken Institute Health bridges innovation gaps across the health-care continuum to advance whole-person health throughout the life span by improving healthy aging, public health, biomedical science, and food systems.

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