

What healthcare providers should demand from technology in 2020

Healthcare is being transformed and digitalised rapidly, creating increasing pressure for healthcare providers to ensure their technology systems and infrastructure are up to date and ready to handle increased loads. The right technology investments can help healthcare organisations improve outcomes for patients, so it's essential to understand the current landscape and choose wisely, according to Wavelink.

Alan Stocker, health practice lead, Wavelink, said, "There are many technology developments set to have a huge impact on the healthcare industry. Some of this technology is still in the early stages of development, while other solutions are already delivering benefits for forward-thinking health providers. The savvy providers are making sure they're ready for cutting-edge technology today so that they can improve the patient and practitioner experience in the future."

There are six key technologies set to begin transforming the patient experience and make life easier for healthcare providers:

1. **Wearable technology** and the Internet of Things (IoT) can radically transform patient treatment, letting patients receive treatment and monitoring at home rather than being admitted to hospital. Wearable health-related devices and sensors, plus mobile health apps, will help keep ill, elderly, and vulnerable people safer and improve their health outcomes.
2. **5G networks** will create the necessary bandwidth for healthcare practitioners to make full use of these emerging technologies without concern for latency or connectivity issues.
3. **Artificial intelligence and machine learning** will become the norm, using big data and advanced decision-making capabilities to improve diagnostic accuracy and speed, improving healthcare outcomes and experiences for individuals and for populations as a whole.
4. **Data interoperability** will make it easier for healthcare providers to share patient information securely via My Health Record.
5. **Patient-centric healthcare** will put the patient at the centre of the healthcare model, providing treatment-in-place options that can help reduce unnecessary hospitalisations, ambulance transport, and other pressures on healthcare providers.
6. **Applied analytics** will help healthcare providers understand what populations require in terms of early intervention and attention to overcome health disparities, especially in Indigenous populations.

One of the most important considerations for healthcare organisations in preparing to adopt any of these new technologies is security. The more connected the organisation becomes, the more essential it will be to ensure that its networks are as strongly secured as possible to prevent breaches that could have significant consequences. For example, cybercriminals could sabotage procedures or hold information to ransom that could affect people's health.

Alan Stocker said, "There are a growing number of cybersecurity threats within the healthcare sector, especially as medical devices are now becoming network enabled. In 2020, it's essential for every healthcare organisation to review its cybersecurity strategy and strengthen it wherever possible. It's essential to have full visibility into the organisation's network including all devices that are connected

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to it. It's also crucial to have effective network segmentation and a security solution that simplifies the inevitable complexity of maintaining patient privacy, keeping devices online and malware-free, and ensuring the network remains available."

Effective communication among staff members will also remain absolutely essential for healthcare providers in 2020, which means providing staff members with devices that help them keep in touch and can minimise the amount of time spent away from patients' bedsides.

Alan Stocker said, "Patient care can be improved when clinicians have all the information to hand, can easily track test results and prescriptions, and hand over to their colleagues seamlessly. Healthcare organisations should therefore demand that their technology include robust solutions for real-time communication and collaboration. This should extend to include the secure sharing of patient information and workflow division communications for critical alarms and medical tasks.

"Healthcare providers need to leverage health-specific communications platforms to improve the patient's and clinician's experience. It's important for healthcare organisations to partner with a provider that understands healthcare and that can offer expert advice and deliver a strong return on the organisation's investment in technology."