When will "digital health" just become health

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Despite the significant drop in funding in 2022, digital health is here to stay. It encompasses a wide range of technologies and innovations, from telemedicine to wearables to artificial intelligence (AI). Telehealth has reached 80% adoption and wearable ownership is approaching 50% in markets like the US. And the promise of digital health is immense: improved patient outcomes, increased efficiency, greater access, earlier detection of disease and cost savings for healthcare systems. And while there are still some challenges to overcome such as reimbursement models, disparities in access, interoperability, data privacy/security the future is bright.

There are many trends converging that will lead to its rapid adoption and transformation of the industry. One such trend is the **rise of consumer-like models.** Digital health companies are increasingly adopting consumer-like models, such as subscription-based services and direct-to-consumer marketing. This is making digital health more accessible to patients and driving awareness of these solutions and adoption. To accelerate scale-up and patient access, leaders in pharma and other industries should consider embracing these models. This could lead to consolidation and cross-industry pollination, driving innovation and unlocking new opportunities. We are already seeing this begin to happen with the recent acquisition of One Medical and launch of RxPass by Amazon, for example.

Fueled by the recent uptake of generative AI platforms like OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google's BARD, the **growth of artificial intelligence (AI) is moving from the background to the foreground of healthcare.** AI is being used to develop new digital health tools and technologies, such as chatbots, virtual assistants, and self-diagnostic tools. AI can also be used to improve the efficiency and accuracy of healthcare delivery. Everyone is experimenting with ways to enhance their own productivity and healthcare is no different. AI won't replace doctors, but it will replace doctors that don't use AI in order to better perform their jobs.

AI also has the potential to become more transparent and be run on both identified and de-identified data across data sources and even at the edge. This could lead to new insights and discoveries that were previously impossible. **All future therapies may include a digital component, and digital therapeutics could become a standard part of treatment plans.** New care pathways could include digital therapies that are designed to be prescribed before a disease manifests – to stave off disease – or as an adjunct to support a medical intervention. Combining data ecosystems and reinventing care pathways with digital therapeutics will require incumbents and startups to work together to drive innovation at scale around target patient populations.

The **increasing adoption of wearables and other connected devices** is creating a significant new real world data opportunity. Nearly 50% of adults in the US market own some form of wearable device, such as fitness trackers and smartwatches, which can be used to collect data about patient health and activity. This data can be used in numerous ways to improve patient care and to develop new digital health products. Patients themselves are able to track metrics over time, see the impact certain behaviors have on their overall health or fitness, and course correct behaviors when needed.

Patients are **increasingly demanding personalized healthcare solutions** that are tailored to their individual needs. Consumers are used to getting personalized suggestions and products based on their unique preferences in other industries. It only makes sense that they would expect this kind of personalization around their health.

And indeed, perhaps one of the most exciting prospects for **digital health is the ability to provide a continuum of human and digital experiences powered by AI that adapt to the unique needs of each patient.** AI has the potential to transform healthcare by providing personalized treatments and interventions that are tailored to the individual. This could be AI prompting a nurse or caregiver to proactively deliver medication reminders to patients or an AI-driven agent alerting an HCP when a heart failure patient is at elevated risk of an attack. Companies can also come together to form data ecosystems/cooperatives around major disease areas and social determinants to fuel new data hungry AI innovations. Interoperability and sharing of data in a secure, protected manner are critical to enable this. Point solutions will make way for platforms that bring together various products.

These trends and more are converging to create a bright future for digital health. Digital health has the potential to improve patient care, reduce costs, and revolutionize the way healthcare is delivered. And someday soon, digital health won't even be a term used to describe the industry, it will just be health delivered in a Digital and AI-first future. We think that day is a lot closer than most think and we're helping drive that vision forward at EVERSANA and Healthware Group.

If you'd like to discuss how you can accelerate your organization's digital transformation journey, we'd love to connect.

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Roberto Ascione is a renowned entrepreneur and international opinion leader in digital health, with 25 years of experience in marketing, communication, business process transformation, and health innovation. He is the CEO and founder of Healthware Group, an integrated digital health organization. He is also the chairman of Frontiers Health, a leading digital health conference, and the author of the book "Future of Health". Ascione is a regular keynote speaker at global events and has been recognized as a Decade's Best Industry Leader by Health 2.0 and a founding advisor to the Digital Therapeutics Alliance. He is passionate about medicine, information technology, and human-technology interactions, and believes that digital, innovation, and technology are the biggest factors of health transformation.

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Scott Snyder serves as EVERSANA's Chief Digital Officer, driving digital transformation for employees, clients, and the patients we serve. He brings more than 30 years of experience in emerging technologies and digital transformation across both global 1000 companies and startup ventures. Scott is an industry expert on how enterprises can leverage digital and other emerging technologies to accelerate innovation and new venture creation. He has held executive positions with several Fortune 500 companies and has been a featured thought leader in publications including CIO, WIRED, Forbes, Knowledge@Wharton, Los Angeles Times and The Wall Street Journal. Scott is also the co-author of Goliath's Revenge, a book focused on how established companies can turn the table through digital disruption. He earned his B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. in Systems Engineering from the University of Pennsylvania. Scott is currently a Senior Fellow in the Management Department at the Wharton School.

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