STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS RESULTING FROM THIS CHANGING LANDSCAPE

Having explored our 5 future forces and all of the underlying drivers of change that will create this evolving landscape, we have identified a number of strategic implications for those businesses and brands operating in this new world. This will in turn impact on the insight and information that is needed to underpin strategy development and effective execution. Research needs to adapt to meet the new landscape it seeks to understand.

NEED FOR MORE CONSUMER / HUMAN-CENTRIC APPROACHES TO HEALTHCARE

Our future forces outline the fact that patients are becoming more empowered in their choices, with general – and personal - health information more readily available to them.

In parallel they have a wider range of choices for how, where and who they turn to for diagnosis, ongoing treatment, care, monitoring and advice. This is particularly true for those who are more digitally engaged – typically the younger cohorts. It's also relevant for those on higher incomes, who can choose to bypass the traditional / universal publicly funded systems, as well as those not requiring acute or critical care.

Budget constraints in the public sector will increasingly push the financial burden of poor healthcare choices on to the individual. More and more people will have decisions about whether to top up the universal provision of basic primary care with optional top ups or payments into private insurance schemes.

This shift effectively turns more passive "patients" into considered healthcare "consumers", taking responsibility for their own healthcare choices and outcomes. This shift has been gradual but looks to intensify over the next 5-10 years.

Consumers who choose to make their own healthcare decisions have a plethora of options to choose from in terms of accessing both initial diagnosis and ongoing advice, treatment and monitoring. The majority of patients are no longer passive consumers of treatment, drugs and services.

As a result, a more holistic, human view of their needs, habits and lifestyles is required by all operating in the industry. This requires a deeper consideration of the wider needs of a patient, beyond the immediate diagnosis and condition they are looking to solve for. This might include for example a deeper exploration of their wider lifestyle needs, habits, priorities and preferences or a greater understanding of the broader health and cultural context and related conversations which might impact or influence how someone views a particular solution and how it fits with their own identity, lifestyle and context. This will require more collaboration between different partners and sharing of data, but also new types of insight and research, incorporating things like social data, cultural insight, lifelogging and a much wider, multi-disciplinary approach to understanding and meeting consumer expectations in many areas of the healthcare industry.

> The migraine life is an excellent blog that considers migraine from a holistic point of view and offers sufferers help and advice across the many ways in which the condition touches their lives and can be tackled →

MORE COMPLEX PATIENT JOURNEYS AND TOUCHPOINTS

Linked to the above need to take a more human approach to understanding healthcare needs, there is also a need to understand the new multitude of agents, actors, influences, touchpoints and occasions that are now part of what we used to call the patient journey.

What used to be – at least in theory – a fairly simple and linear process, whereby a patient would book an appointment with a doctor, go to their surgery to seek advice, diagnosis and perhaps a prescription for treatment, before going to the pharmacy and taking, often literally, their medicine, now that journey is less linear and much more complex at every stage both before, during and after engagement with a medical professional.

Just as the consumer purchase journey and purchase funnel in most consumer goods industries was shaken up by a digital revolution in the early part of the 21st century which saw the emergence of what some commentators called "Everywhere Commerce", so the patient / consumer journey in healthcare is being similarly transformed now, driven by advances in technology and changing consumer lifestyles.

The journey is now a complex world of ongoing monitoring, feedback, involving research and engagement via multiple different channels, influences and agents, alongside a testing of opinion and recommendations with an increasingly wide range of others including friends, family, other patients and patient associations, web-sites and apps, health influencers (some more qualified than others), medical professionals and care givers. People are engaging, researching, viewing, reading, consuming. reflecting and acting on this information almost every moment of every day.

The need to understand the complexity of these different touchpoints and the different actors and influences in each of them is paramount to understand consumer needs and demands and how to meet them effectively.

Digging into more depth around the journey also helps to uncover the emerging channels, touchpoints and actors who ultimately carry most influence in terms of continuing treatment or changing behaviour and ultimately influencing purchase, preference and patient outcomes.

This kind of analysis has been done well by the consumer goods giants for many decades, as they adapt to the digital world and the always on consumer, but it is becoming increasingly necessary for healthcare companies to inform both innovation and also marketing, partnerships and media strategies and ultimately improvement of patient outcomes. All these touchpoints, actors and channels can have key roles to play.

MOVE BEYOND PRODUCTS INTO SERVICES AND EXPERIENCES (INNOVATION "BEYOND THE PILL")

The emergence of the newly empowered and increasingly demanding consumer, along with the wealth of new entrants and channels challenging the legacy players and business models creates a further tension and expectation on the industry.

People increasingly have the same expectations of healthcare that they have in other industries and areas of their life.

They increasingly demand and expect healthcare solutions, treatment and advice to be available on their terms – more tailored, more personal and available at any time in any place they want it.

This creates an expectation of more holistic healthcare solutions and services being delivered on-demand.

This in turn creates a need for many of the more traditional manufacturers to think beyond the product – or beyond the pill – in terms of what they are ultimately creating and selling to the end consumer.

Providing the pill, the cream and medicine will only be part of the solution the consumer (and to some extent healthcare providers) are looking for.

This may require different types of work into unmet needs as well as new types of knowledge and skills in many of the traditional pharmaceutical and healthcare companies, beyond the traditional forms of R&D these companies are well known for and have built their world-class reputations around.

Cutting edge ethnographic techniques combined with effective social media analysis are key approaches that allow us to get closer to the detail of lives lived with a condition and the unmet needs that new products and services can help address.

Smart, remote devices have a big impact on monitoring and managing conditions like hypertension – opening up a wealth of new touchpoints and opportunities →

The Humira Complete programme is designed maximise the positive impact of rheumatoid arthritis drug, Humira, on patient lives by offering a range of personally tailored advice and services for people's individual situations and needs →

NEW FORMS OF COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

The nature of the future challenges and opportunities point to the need for a more collaborative healthcare industry moving forward. Category lines are blurring, consumer needs and demands are increasing and costs pressures are mounting.

The skills required to develop more holistic services and solutions whilst also delivering better patient outcomes in a more cost-effective way are less likely than ever before to sit in one company alone.

Sharing, connecting and unlocking the power of the data that exists in different parts of the health eco-system will likely be a critical part of unlocking new value and solutions that deliver better for patients, healthcare providers, manufacturers and society at large.

With this move beyond simple "products, treatments and medicines" into more holistic solutions, services and experiences" there will need to be greater collaboration and partnership between the more digital and tech-led new entrants to the healthcare sector and the traditional players who have established R&D functions. Given the different skills and expertise that exist, there are likely to be a number of new partnerships and alliances that will be created to unlock this potential.

Further breakthroughs will come when new partnerships emerge that seamlessly share data and knowledge between industry, patients / patient organisations, academia and healthcare professionals, funding bodies and providers to create new forms of value exchange, driving efficiencies and new innovations that can benefit all in terms of patient outcomes and ROI.

However this will require a greater degree of trust and transparency between all of these players than exists today. Barriers will need to be broken down with greater collaboration and data sharing across the different groups to collect data, develop solutions and monitor outcomes, in a more iterative and agile process of continuous feedback, improvement and innovation.

NHS Track and Trace brought the debate about the benefits and downsides of sharing personal health data to the fore for people →

GREATER ROLE FOR BRANDS AS A MARKER OF TRUST AND TRANSPARENCY

Finally, within this evolving landscape and the need for greater collaboration and transparency between different parts of the industry there is likely to emerge a much bigger focus and scrutiny of healthcare brands and businesses, both in terms of their working practices, motivations and the impact they have on patients and wider society.

This places a strategic imperative on businesses and brands operating in this sector to pay more attention to their internal practices and processes and broader business behaviour.

It also places greater emphasis on the true value and purpose of their brand, among consumers, key industry stakeholders, partners and wider society. Many have spoken about the importance and growth of more purpose-driven brands and businesses in recent years and the healthcare industry is not exempt from this trend.

In fact we would argue it's a strategic imperative for healthcare brands and businesses in the future. Those businesses and brands who truly lean into and demonstrate a commitment to a broader purpose and a greater degree of trust and transparency should become the biggest benefactors from all of the shifts we have identified. They will earn the trust and right to collaborate and innovate in a more human centric way with both patients and all the other actors in this increasingly complex, human-led and data-rich landscape that is set to define the next decade.

Brands like Apple have an advantage of already being an established and trusted part of people's lives – something that will be very valuable for when it comes to making people feel comfortable sharing sensitive health data →