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Healthcare's leading headlines from 2023 highlight opportunity for the year ahead

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The Buzz This Week

As the year draws to a close, many news outlets are publishing summary pieces on the biggest developments in healthcare in 2023. The consistent leading headline is around generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), which many industry experts believe could transform healthcare. If carefully adopted, AI applications offer opportunities to improve workforce productivity and experience, elevate the patient experience, and advance health equity.

Increasingly sophisticated AI applications can translate clinician-patient conversations into medical notes and produce medical insights, including combining medical imaging with other patient data to support physician diagnoses. AI tools can also provide real-time information and suggestions to improve the accuracy of hospital coding and billing, up to 80% of which can have errors, per the Boston-based Access Project. Chatbots can enhance access to care and patient experience. A recent article in Harvard Business Review went as far to say that generative AI will not act as a technology “substitution” but rather will transform the entire healthcare ecosystem.

While GenAI has eclipsed other healthcare news, persisting workforce shortages and challenges have also grabbed headlines in 2023. Organizations are turning to increasingly creative approaches to alleviate the impact, including rural hospitals offering shadowing opportunities for K-12 students in a “grow your own” workforce pipeline strategy, and a number of health systems forming their own nursing “float pools” or internal “traveling nurse” agencies. Workforce wellness initiatives have become an organizational priority at many organizations, with a renewed recognition that a physically and psychologically healthy workforce is necessary for high-quality, safe patient care.

Why It Matters

The transformative possibilities of GenAI and renewed focus on building and supporting a thriving workforce paint a hopeful outlook for the new year. And while a holistic approach to workforce wellness based on data-driven strategies can't be executed overnight, a special focus on workforce well-being is particularly important at the close of the year as patient volumes typically soar, potentially straining already understaffed hospitals and causing additional stress to staff.

Healthcare organizations can support their staff by ensuring adequate breaks, meals, and support services, and by teaching self-care techniques. Healthcare organizations should make continued efforts to assess what their staff need throughout the year to be healthy, engaged, and productive and engage them in solutions. If certain changes made during the holidays have a markedly positive impact, they should be considered for year-round implementation.

As we pause to reflect on the year behind and the new year to come, significant challenges remain. But positive trends and transformative opportunities also lie ahead as healthcare organizations seek to make the world a better place for their patients, employees, and communities.

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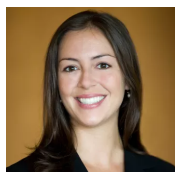
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