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Big Tech expands healthcare offerings: Microsoft, Apple, and Zoom advance innovations

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The Buzz This Week

The health tech industry has expanded rapidly, reaching an estimated \$300 billion in 2024, as leading players like Epic Systems, Cerner, and Teladoc have shaped digital health solutions. Recently, Microsoft, Apple, and Zoom have signaled a deepening commitment to healthcare with new product launches and strategic expansions. While these tech giants have previously partnered with healthcare—such as Microsoft’s cloud solutions for health systems and Apple’s initiatives in consumer health data—their latest initiatives reflect a stronger focus on healthcare delivery.

Microsoft’s healthcare artificial intelligence (AI) solution DAX Copilot is now “documenting over 1.3 million physician-patient encounters monthly at over 500 healthcare organizations,” according to Chief Executive Officer Satya Nadella. Northwestern Medicine reports that physicians using the solution can see an average of 11.3 additional patients per month while spending 24% less time on documentation.

Zoom, which holds nearly 36% market share among telehealth vendors, is expanding its clinical offerings. The company plans to integrate Suki’s ambient AI documentation technology into its platform and is launching three new healthcare-specific platforms: Workplace for Healthcare, Workplace for Clinicians, and a medical translation service.

At UC San Diego Health, surgeons have completed more than 20 minimally invasive operations using Apple Vision Pro headsets. The \$3,499 spatial computing headset designed for professional applications offers cost advantages over traditional surgical monitoring systems that can cost \$20,000 to \$30,000. Apple Chief Financial Officer Luca Maestri notes that UC San Diego Health is “the first hospital in the world to test spatial computing apps on Apple Vision Pro in clinical trials for patient surgery.”

Why It Matters

The entry of major tech companies into healthcare presents significant potential but also major challenges. While Big Tech brings substantial resources and innovation capacity, healthcare has proven a difficult landscape for aspiring disruptors.

Google Health, for instance, aimed to improve access by centralizing patient records. But it shut down in 2011 due to privacy concerns and low adoption. Similarly, IBM launched its Watson Health initiative to transform clinical decision-making through AI. It struggled with data integration and outcome reliability, leading IBM to sell off Watson Health's assets in 2022.

Even with these previous failures, Big Tech's latest initiatives suggest a focus on healthcare-specific challenges, such as reducing administrative burdens and enhancing patient care delivery. For example, Microsoft's DAX Copilot aims to streamline documentation for clinicians. Zoom's new telehealth platforms enhance clinical collaboration. And Apple's Vision Pro may bring efficiencies to surgical workflows. These innovations align with Big Tech's broader efforts to address pain points in healthcare.

Looking ahead, trends from the recent HLTH conference, a leading event for healthcare innovation, indicate further convergence of digital and physical healthcare solutions. Nvidia's presentation highlighted advancements in vision language models (VILA), which replicate physical environments to develop healthcare digital twins. Such models could soon optimize hospital operations, improve remote patient management, and provide risk-free training for surgical robotics.

In wearables, consumer demand rises for more personalized, health-oriented devices. Apple recently introduced features targeting sleep apnea. And Oura partnered with Essence Healthcare to provide Medicare Advantage members with free Oura Rings.

However, these new developments come with regulatory and financial considerations for healthcare organizations. Implementing new solutions involves investments in training, infrastructure, and long-term support. Integration with existing electronic health records systems presents interoperability challenges. And reliance on proprietary platforms can lead to vendor lock-in, limiting organizational flexibility over time.

Ultimately, healthcare leaders will need to weigh the potential benefits of these tools against their strategic goals, budgetary constraints, and unique organizational needs.

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