

# KEY TRENDS IN HEALTH

## AT MILKEN INSTITUTE GLOBAL CONFERENCE 2023

JULY 2023

The 26th annual Milken Institute Global Conference convened the best minds in the world to tackle its most urgent challenges and realize its most exciting opportunities. Throughout the four-day event, MI Health curated nearly three dozen sessions that highlighted ongoing programmatic work. We heard from esteemed leaders across industries and sectors about how they are working to accelerate solutions for the pressing issues we face in medical research, public health, food systems, and healthy aging.

This brief summarizes the key trends, ideas, and solutions discussed at Global Conference to improve health.

### ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Artificial intelligence (AI) offers tremendous potential to drive technological advancements for health care. Its applications encompass:

- **biosecurity:** AI is used to predict biological threats, create vaccines, and design other technologies that support preparedness.
- **health systems:** Health care providers are leveraging AI to diagnose illnesses, better predict care protocols and to inform clinical decisions for improved patient outcomes.
- **drug discovery:** AI is enabling researchers to identify potential drug candidates, enable faster and more efficient target identification and molecule design, and predict drug safety and efficacy.

The benefits of AI come with a note of caution that health inequities may be exacerbated without sufficient attention and care in its design and application.

### CANCER AND HEALTH EQUITY

Equity and access remain significant challenges in cancer care. We see disparities when we stratify health outcomes by race, ethnicity, geography, income, disability status, English language proficiency, health literacy, numeracy, sexual orientation, and gender identity. We need infrastructure to support **community-based care** so all patient communities can access the latest innovations and a multisector approach to collaborate and incorporate new technologies.

With over a million genomes studied worldwide, less than 1 percent are whole genomes from Africans. While Africa has received less than 1 percent of the global investment in genomics research, there are promising improvements in regulatory actions and research initiatives to close the gap in **cancer genomics research** on the continent. Additionally, there are opportunities to grow the footprint of clinical trials conducted and increase the diversity of participants.

## CLIMATE CHANGE

Our current **food system** is structured around incentives that negatively impact climate, biodiversity, soil, water, deforestation, and pollution. While food systems contribute to more than 30 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, the space receives only 3 percent of public climate financing. We need sustainable funding mechanisms to shift the incentive structure towards sustainability and resiliency, as well as simple, scalable solutions that can support local, regional, and global food systems, which do not necessarily need to be high-tech. We also need **global response plans** for climate disasters and pathogens to improve biosecurity.

## CLINICAL TRIALS

Better data can facilitate the discovery of treatments and cures. To achieve this, we need to:

- **Improve access to clinical trials:** Eighty percent of cancer patients are not treated at an academic research center, yet most clinical trials still happen there. We need to bring clinical trials directly to the people. Geography should not be a limiting factor in participation. Investments are necessary for **infrastructure capacity building** at community hospitals so we can bridge the rural/urban gap.
- **Ensure diverse representation in clinical research** by following these best practices:
  - reconsidering overly restrictive inclusion/exclusion criteria in trial protocols;
  - diversifying the workforce, from C-suite leaders to researchers and frontline care workers;
  - using real-world evidence collected from electronic health data, claims data and patient-generated health data to confirm effectiveness, particularly the post-approval phase; and
  - including populations from lower-income countries in clinical trials and ensuring they have access to the drugs that are developed when they hit the market.

## DIGITAL HEALTH

The electronic health data ecosystem is coming together to realize that better health is better business. Most hospitals are using a certified electronic health record, and people are opting into research and accessing their information. These **health data are rich assets for research.**

Trust is key to driving a proactive health-care system focused on prevention and wellness. The future includes the design of **digital health interventions that connect to a patient's care-delivery journey.** With new partnerships across the ecosystem, these digital solutions could also include new service lines to expand the options for care at home and intervene before patients get to their doctors.

## MENTAL HEALTH

Growing up in a digital world means youth (and people of all ages) are **exposed to dangers online** and must decipher what is real versus portrayed. Social media contributes to a range of public health issues, such as eating disorders, addiction, and depression. Yet disconnecting from the technology is not always helpful as online platforms can offer a sense of community.

We have entire populations that are not accessing primary care doctors and feel more comfortable leveraging **community resources**, so solutions must involve both the **private and public sectors. Employers are uniquely positioned to advance mental health** by providing resources and support for their employees, as well as the broader community. They are increasingly adopting a “whole person” approach to health, as they address the needs of five generations in the workforce.

## SCIENCE OF LONGEVITY

Despite longer lifespans over the past century, our health span—the period we spend in good health—has not kept pace. **Geroscience**, a field dedicated to the biology of aging, is growing exponentially and focuses on 12 hallmarks of aging—such as cellular senescence and chronic inflammation—that contribute to multiple age-related diseases. Drugs and other interventions show promise in manipulating these factors.

Practicing healthy behaviors like sleep, nutrition, exercise, and social interaction also delay the onset of many diseases and extend lifespan and health span. For example, understanding the brain's connection to other body systems illuminates a needed whole-body approach to health and reinforces the importance of healthy behaviors in building cognitive resilience.

To fully realize the dividends of advances in science and prevention, we must work to build an **age-inclusive** society and mitigate the tangible impacts of ageism. Ageism hurts our health, financial, and emotional well-being. By fighting negative stereotyping across sectors—including communications, marketing, and entertainment—we can **change the narrative on aging and older adults**.