

Opportunities for Real-World Data Will Grow as Big Tech Embraces Healthcare Partnerships



Kristi Mitchell



Sung Hee Choe

Summary

Partnerships between traditional healthcare players and big technology companies seek to improve care delivery and patient outcomes in innovative ways.

It is no secret that the volume and variety of real-world data (RWD) being generated has continued to expand. Sources now include electronic medical records, health insurance records, genomics, social media, and wearables. At the same time, the technology platforms and analytic tools available to manage and derive insights from RWD continue to evolve.

As the availability of RWD sources and new platforms increases, there is even greater urgency to develop, nurture, and maintain strong partnerships to support the collection and use of these types of data to support healthcare decision making. Recognizing this opportunity, big technology companies have staked a claim in healthcare, striking a wide variety of partnerships with traditional healthcare players. These partnerships seek to develop innovative solutions that advance common goals for the healthcare system:

- **Empower patients to take control of their health.** Under an agreement signed in 2018, One Drop became the first wireless blood glucose monitoring system to connect directly to the Apple Watch. Patients can monitor their blood sugars, medications, and meals as well as view daily statistics; based on this information, patients can receive personalized recommendations

on how to keep blood sugars within a target range.

- **Incentivize patients to be healthy.** Aetna and Apple have co-developed a wellness and medication adherence app that allows people to accumulate “points” if they meet specified wellness goals. These points are then applied toward payment for an Apple Watch. Patients who meet their monthly goals would not need to make any payments.
- **Develop digital health centers.** Under a 7-year agreement, Walgreens and Microsoft will develop new ways to deliver health services at Walgreens stores. While the partnership is still early, planned areas of focus include virtually connecting people with Walgreens stores and providing personalized healthcare services through digital devices.
- **Accelerate medical product development.** Merck and Accenture will develop a new cloud-based research platform on Amazon’s cloud computing service, Amazon Web Services. The new platform would enable researchers to aggregate and analyze data from various applications in order to inform early product development decisions.

While it will take time to determine if these partnerships are successful in achieving their goals, one thing is clear: widespread adoption of digital tools will make technology companies important players and partners in the quest to improve healthcare.

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