



Advancing AI across healthcare operations



WHITEPAPER

Three shifts reshaping
provider automation

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Executive summary



Healthcare providers have reached an important inflection point in their automation journey. While investment in artificial intelligence has accelerated across the industry, many organizations are finding that isolated AI tools and disconnected automation initiatives are not delivering the operational improvements they expected. The next phase of automation will be focused on integrating intelligence into the workflows and processes that support care delivery and business operations.

Across the industry, providers are connecting AI across the patient journey, expanding automation from individual tasks to end-to-end operational workflows, and establishing stronger governance to support the responsible use of AI in clinical and administrative settings. Together, these shifts reflect a broader transition from deploying AI capabilities to operationalizing AI across the enterprise.

For healthcare leaders, the opportunity extends beyond improving productivity or reducing administrative burden. Organizations that approach automation as an enterprise capability are better positioned to strengthen operational performance, improve patient and workforce experiences, increase organizational capacity, and realize greater value from existing AI investments.

This paper examines the forces driving this transition, explores the major shifts reshaping automation across healthcare providers, highlights representative operational use cases, and outlines practical considerations for leaders preparing their organizations for the next phase of enterprise automation.

Why this matters now

Healthcare providers are under increasing pressure to deliver better patient outcomes while operating with fewer resources. Workforce shortages, rising labor costs, persistent administrative burden, and tightening financial margins continue to challenge organizations across the industry. At the same time, patients expect faster access to care, more personalized experiences, and seamless interactions across every stage of the care journey.

In response, healthcare organizations have accelerated investments in artificial intelligence, automation, and digital transformation. These technologies have demonstrated measurable value in areas such as clinical documentation, scheduling, revenue cycle, and care coordination. Yet many providers continue to struggle to translate those investments into broad operational improvement. AI often delivers value within individual applications or departments, while the workflows that connect people, systems, and care delivery remain fragmented.

As Forrester observed following HIMSS26, the industry has entered a period of transition from 'AI optimism to operational reckoning'. The focus is shifting from experimenting with AI capabilities to demonstrating measurable operational value by embedding AI into everyday workflows rather than deploying standalone tools.

For healthcare leaders, the question is no longer whether to invest in AI. The challenge is determining how to integrate AI into the operational processes that drive clinical, administrative, and business performance. Organizations that can connect intelligence across patient care and operational workflows will be better positioned to improve efficiency, strengthen the workforce, enhance patient experiences, and maximize the value of their technology investments.



The challenge is no longer whether to invest in AI. It is how to integrate AI into the operational processes that drive healthcare performance.



Healthcare provider automation snapshot



Healthcare providers are increasing investments in artificial intelligence and automation as they look for practical ways to address financial constraints, workforce limitations, and persistent operational inefficiency. AI and analytics became healthcare organizations' top IT investment priority in 2025, rising from sixth place in 2023, [according to KLAS research](#).

Investments are increasingly concentrated in use cases with a clear connection to operational and financial performance. For providers, current priorities include revenue cycle management, clinical documentation, patient access, and other workflows where administrative effort contributes to delays or lost revenue. [Research from KLAS](#) and Bain found that 70% of providers had an AI strategy underway, with organizations showing renewed interest in solutions that can improve documentation and reduce claim denials.

Yet the operating environment remains highly fragmented. Many processes cross multiple applications, data sources, departments, and manual handoffs. This complexity makes it difficult to extend the value of AI beyond an individual task or system.

[Forrester expects](#) analytics and AI to move beyond singular use cases and become embedded across clinical workflows and healthcare operations, reflecting a broader shift toward enterprise adoption.

Providers are therefore evaluating automation less as a collection of isolated tools and more as a way to improve how work moves across the organization. The priority is shifting toward measurable workflow impact, stronger integration with existing systems, and technology investments that can alleviate administrative workload without adding further complexity.

MAJOR SHIFT 1**From isolated AI tools to connected care journeys**

Healthcare providers are moving beyond isolated AI applications toward a more connected approach that embeds intelligence throughout the patient journey. Rather than implementing AI within a single department or workflow, organizations are increasingly looking to connect capabilities across scheduling, patient intake, clinical documentation, referral management, care coordination, patient communications, discharge planning, and follow-up. The objective is not simply to automate individual tasks, but to reduce friction across the entire care experience while improving operational performance.

Several factors are driving this shift. AI technologies have matured rapidly, healthcare organizations have significantly expanded digital and AI investments, and operational pressures continue to intensify. Workforce shortages, administrative burden, and rising patient expectations have made it increasingly difficult for providers to rely on disconnected systems and manual handoffs. As Forrester noted following HIMSS26, "AI now has to prove operational value." The focus is shifting from deploying AI capabilities to improving measurable business and clinical outcomes through connected workflows.

Leading providers are applying this approach across high-value operational processes where information, decisions, and work frequently move between multiple teams and systems. Care coordination, referral management, patient access, clinical documentation, discharge planning, and patient communications are emerging as priority areas because improvements in one stage of the patient journey often create downstream benefits across the continuum of care.

The transition is not without challenges. Many healthcare organizations continue to operate across fragmented applications, legacy infrastructure, and inconsistent data. Clinical adoption, interoperability, governance, and change management remain critical success factors. Connecting AI across the patient journey requires more than introducing new technology. It requires rethinking how information flows between people, systems, and operational processes.

**Executive considerations**

As healthcare organizations expand AI across the patient journey, leaders should consider the following priorities:

- Focus on end-to-end care journeys rather than isolated automation opportunities.
- Establish governance that promotes trust, transparency, and responsible AI adoption.
- Prioritize workflows that span multiple departments, systems, and clinical teams.
- Measure success through operational and patient outcomes rather than AI deployment alone.

MAJOR SHIFT 2**Administrative workflows are becoming autonomous**

Healthcare providers are expanding automation beyond individual administrative tasks to orchestrate entire operational workflows. Rather than deploying AI to assist with a single step in a process, organizations are connecting intelligence, automation, business rules, and human decision-making across complete workflows. The result is faster execution, fewer manual handoffs, greater consistency, and reduced administrative burden.

This shift is being driven by continued workforce shortages, increasing financial pressure, growing regulatory complexity, and the need to improve operational efficiency without proportionally increasing headcount. Advances in AI, intelligent document processing, and workflow automation have also made it possible to automate processes that previously depended on manual review, repetitive data entry, or coordination across multiple departments.

Administrative workflows are becoming a primary area of investment. Providers are applying AI and automation across prior authorization, revenue cycle management, clinical documentation, referral management, patient intake, scheduling, and care coordination. Increasingly, these workflows span multiple enterprise systems, requiring information to move seamlessly between electronic health records, payer systems, scheduling platforms, document repositories, and care management applications.

Success depends on more than automating individual activities. Many organizations continue to face challenges related to fragmented technology environments, inconsistent data, interoperability, governance, and workforce adoption. Without a coordinated approach, automation initiatives can create additional complexity rather than eliminating it.

**Executive considerations**

As administrative workflows become increasingly autonomous, healthcare leaders should consider the following priorities:

- Identify high-value workflows where automation can reduce end-to-end administrative effort rather than isolated tasks.
- Standardize processes before scaling automation across departments and enterprise systems.
- Build governance, human oversight, and performance measurement into automated workflows from the outset.
- Evaluate success based on operational outcomes such as cycle time, workforce capacity, quality, and patient experience rather than automation volume alone.

MAJOR SHIFT 3**Governance is becoming a competitive advantage**

As artificial intelligence becomes embedded in clinical and operational workflows, governance is emerging as a strategic business capability rather than simply a compliance requirement. Healthcare providers are recognizing that enterprise-scale automation depends on establishing the policies, controls, and oversight needed to ensure AI is deployed responsibly, transparently, and consistently across the organization.

Several factors are accelerating this shift. AI is increasingly supporting decisions that affect patient care, operational performance, and financial outcomes. At the same time, regulatory expectations continue to evolve, and healthcare organizations must protect sensitive patient information while maintaining trust among clinicians, staff, and patients. These realities are elevating the importance of human oversight, explainability, auditability, and clinical accountability as organizations expand the use of AI.

Providers are embedding governance across a wide range of operational and clinical workflows, including clinical documentation, prior authorization, care coordination, revenue cycle operations, and patient communications. Rather than treating governance as a separate function, leading organizations are integrating it directly into the way AI-enabled workflows are designed, monitored, and managed.

Building this level of governance is not without challenges. Many providers continue to operate across multiple technology platforms, inconsistent governance models, and evolving AI capabilities. Establishing clear accountability, maintaining audit trails, protecting patient data, and ensuring appropriate human review all require coordination across clinical, operational, compliance, and technology teams.

**Executive considerations**

As AI adoption expands across the enterprise, healthcare leaders should consider the following priorities:

- Establish governance frameworks before scaling AI across critical clinical and operational workflows.
- Define where human oversight is required to support clinical judgment, operational decisions, and regulatory obligations.
- Ensure AI-enabled workflows provide transparency, explainability, and complete auditability.
- View governance as a strategic capability that enables organizations to scale AI responsibly while strengthening trust across the enterprise.

Automation in action

Healthcare providers are applying automation most effectively where administrative work is document-heavy, spans multiple systems, and delays clinical or operational decisions. While all providers' priorities differ, four high-impact areas demonstrate where AI and intelligent automation are delivering measurable operational value.



Care coordination

How AI is being applied

Care management teams are using AI to unify fragmented member information across claims, clinical records, pharmacy data, social determinants of health, provider interactions, and care plans. Rather than replacing care managers, AI surfaces risks, recommends next best actions, automates documentation, and prepares care teams with the context needed to make faster, more informed decisions while maintaining human oversight.

Typical business outcomes

- Faster care decisions
- Reduced administrative burden
- More efficient care journey management
- Improved member engagement
- Greater care team capacity and scalability



Prior authorization

How AI is being applied

AI-powered document intelligence automates the intake, classification, extraction, and validation of clinical documentation required for prior authorization. Information is routed into existing workflows, allowing staff to focus on exceptions rather than manually reviewing every submission. Prior authorization has emerged as a high-value opportunity for AI-powered document intelligence and workflow automation.

Typical business outcomes

- 60% faster prior authorization processing
- Approximately 80% improvement in data accuracy



Discharge summary generation

How AI is being applied

Healthcare providers are using AI to aggregate information from encounter documents, physician notes, laboratory results, medications, and other clinical records to generate comprehensive discharge summaries. Rather than replacing clinician judgment, AI prepares an evidence-backed draft that clinicians review, refine, and approve before discharge, reducing documentation burden while accelerating care transitions.

Typical business outcomes

- **70%+ reduction in clinician effort** spent creating discharge summaries*
- **60% faster** discharge summary creation and review*
- **Full traceability** from every structured summary to its source clinical evidence

* Proposed outcomes are based on validated UST healthcare customer implementations.



Characteristics of healthcare automation leaders

Healthcare organizations are taking different paths toward AI adoption, but those achieving the greatest operational impact share several common characteristics. Rather than focusing on implementing more AI tools, they focus on transforming how work gets done across the enterprise.



They think end-to-end, not department-by-department

Automation leaders look beyond individual functions and optimize complete operational workflows. By improving how information, decisions, and actions move across the organization, they reduce friction, improve consistency, and create more efficient operations.



They connect AI across operational workflows

The greatest value comes from integrating AI into existing business processes, where insights, recommendations, and decisions become part of day-to-day operations rather than standalone outputs.



They build governance into execution

Successful organizations embed security, privacy, explainability, auditability, and human oversight into automated workflows from the beginning. This allows them to scale AI responsibly while maintaining trust and regulatory compliance.



They keep people in critical decisions.

AI accelerates analysis, surfaces relevant information, and automates routine administrative work, but people remain responsible for decisions that require clinical expertise, operational judgment, or accountability.



They measure operational outcomes instead of AI adoption.

Leading organizations evaluate success by improvements in operational performance, including reduced administrative effort, faster decision-making, increased workforce capacity, improved experiences, and better business outcomes.



They scale through orchestration rather than disconnected automation.

Instead of deploying isolated automations across the enterprise, they coordinate AI, enterprise systems, workflows, and people into connected operational processes that can evolve and scale over time.

**Questions every healthcare leader should be asking**

- Are our AI initiatives improving isolated tasks or transforming end-to-end operational workflows?
- Where do manual handoffs, disconnected systems, or fragmented processes create the greatest delays for patients, care teams, or administrative staff?
- Are we measuring AI success by technology adoption or by measurable operational outcomes?
- Have we built governance, security, and human oversight into our AI-enabled workflows from the beginning?
- Are we creating reusable automation capabilities that can scale across the enterprise?
- Are we preparing to orchestrate AI, people, data, and workflows together, or are we continuing to deploy standalone automation projects?

How healthcare leaders are preparing for what's next

The organizations realizing the greatest value from AI are not simply deploying more AI tools. They are building the operational foundation needed to scale AI across the enterprise.

Leading organizations are establishing enterprise automation strategies that align technology investments with business priorities rather than individual departmental initiatives. They are standardizing governance to ensure AI operates securely, transparently, and responsibly across increasingly complex environments. They are prioritizing high-value workflows where automation can reduce administrative burden, accelerate decision-making, and improve experiences for both care teams and patients.

Rather than creating one-off solutions, they are investing in reusable automation capabilities that can be applied across multiple business functions and adapted as organizational needs evolve. Most importantly, they are planning for enterprise orchestration, connecting AI, people, data, systems, and operational workflows into coordinated processes that can scale over time.

Healthcare's next transformation will not be defined by how many AI tools organizations deploy. It will be defined by how effectively they turn AI-generated insights into coordinated operational execution across the enterprise. Organizations that build this foundation today will be better positioned to improve care delivery, increase operational efficiency, strengthen workforce capacity, and adapt to whatever comes next.

Conclusion

Healthcare providers have moved beyond asking whether AI can improve operations. The focus is now on applying AI responsibly and at scale to deliver measurable business and clinical value. The organizations that succeed will be those that treat automation as an enterprise capability, connecting AI, people, data, and workflows into coordinated operational processes. By building this foundation today, providers will be better positioned to improve care delivery, strengthen workforce capacity, and realize greater value from their AI investments.



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