New Study from Google Cloud and The Harris Poll Reports How Generative AI Can Tackle Administrative Burdens in U.S. Healthcare

Study also outlines how gen AI can improve medical systems and help doctors and nurses provide better care

SUNNYVALE, Calif., Oct. 17, 2024 /PRNewswire/ -- Google Cloud today announced a comprehensive new research report that reveals the significant amount of time healthcare professionals spend on administrative tasks, and how generative AI (gen AI) could potentially alleviate these burdens and improve patient care.

The report, "Measuring the administrative burden on U.S. healthcare workers—and how generative AI can help," highlights how administrative burdens contribute to burnout, staff shortages, and less time spent with patients. However, gen AI – when implemented responsibly with safeguards in place to protect patient data and ensure accuracy – could be a potential game-changer for the healthcare industry.

Key findings from the report include:

- **Administrative overload:** Clinicians spend nearly 28 hours per week on administrative tasks, while medical office staff and claims staff spend 34 and 36 hours, respectively. This includes maintaining detailed patient records, completing insurance forms and referrals, documenting procedures performed, organizing documentation for claims, and inputting claim information into the system, among other things.
- **Burnout and shortages:** The majority of healthcare providers and payors agree that administrative work contributes to burnout and staffing shortages, with 82% of clinicians, 81% of medical staff, and 77% of claims staff reporting feeling burnt out.
- **Reduced patient care:** 80% of providers report that administrative tasks take away from time spent with patients, 68% say this time away impacts the quality of care.
- **Increased error risk:** Two-thirds of providers and 89% of payors express concern about human error in administrative tasks.
- **Openness to AI:** The vast majority of healthcare providers (91%) and payors (97%) feel positive about using gen AI for administrative tasks. In addition, 72% of the general population agree that it is worth using AI tools that would help healthcare practitioners focus more on quality patient care.

"Healthcare workers have historically faced significant administrative burdens, and this has intensified in recent years due to increased regulatory requirements, complex billing processes, and associated EHR documentation requirements," said Aashima Gupta, global director of Healthcare Strategy & Solutions, Google Cloud. "But generative AI offers a powerful solution. By automating tasks and streamlining workflows, it supports healthcare experts, ultimately improving medical systems and helping doctors and nurses provide better care."

Many Google Cloud customers are turning to gen AI to streamline workflows and reclaim valuable time for patient care. Hackensack Meridian *Health* began to explore gen AI in 2023 with Google Cloud, and has since developed a tool that helps employees with administrative tasks.

"We've seen firsthand how generative AI can significantly boost employee productivity. We built an AI-enabled chat tool, powered by Google's Gemini large language model (LLM), that helps with administrative tasks like summarizing meeting notes, drafting emails, preparing for conversations and summarizing articles and research," said Sameer Sethi, SVP and chief data and analytics officer, Hackensack Meridian *Health*. "This tool is already freeing up our team members to focus on what matters most: providing exceptional patient care."

Search and summarization to ease the burden of administrative work

Generative AI is transforming how healthcare professionals access and use patient information. By understanding the intent behind a search, it can intelligently surface the most relevant data from various sources, going beyond simple keyword matching to provide more contextualized results. This technology can also analyze lengthy clinical notes and create concise summaries tailored to specific needs, such as quick reviews or patient education materials.

MEDITECH is bringing advanced AI-powered search and summarization capabilities to its Expanse EHR, enabling clinicians to quickly and intuitively access comprehensive patient information from both structured and unstructured data sources. For example, clinicians can use the Expanse EHR's search and summarization to instantly review past provider notes by specific section, such as "HPI" or "Assessment," and to confirm patient conditions like sepsis or surgical site infections within minutes, eliminating the need for lengthy chart reviews.

"MEDITECH's successful integration of AI into our Expanse EHR is having a real-world impact, with customers like Mile Bluff Medical Center saving upwards of 7.5 minutes of preparation time per patient," said Helen Waters, executive vice president and COO, MEDITECH. "Our customers are able to leverage generative AI to reduce clinical and administrative burdens and improve patient outcomes by delivering more comprehensive patient care. As we continue to expand the rollout of this technology to new patients and use cases, there is no limit to the groundbreaking impact we can make on patient care."

Clinical documentation, helping doctors and nurses provide better care
Gen AI can also automate many of the tedious tasks associated with clinical documentation, such as discharge summaries, patient visit summaries, progress notes, discharge instructions, and referral letters, which clinicians can then review and finalize. This can free up clinicians to focus on patient care and other important tasks.

HCA Healthcare is improving how nurses share critical patient information by developing a generative AI-powered nurse handoff tool, created in partnership with frontline nurses.

"We're committed to empowering nurses by reducing their administrative burden and enabling them to focus on what matters most: patient care," said Michael J. Schlosser, MD, MBA, FAANS, SVP, Care Transformation and Innovation, HCA Healthcare. "Our nurse handoff tool is transforming the way critical patient information is shared. By streamlining this traditionally tedious and manual process, we're not only improving efficiency and communication, but also ensuring that nurses have more time to connect with patients and provide truly personalized care."

Earlier this year, Community Health Systems announced how it is planning to bring gen AI to some of its tools to help with administrative tasks.

"By embracing generative AI, we can significantly reduce the administrative burden on our healthcare providers, allowing them to focus on what matters most: delivering high-quality patient care," said Miguel S. Benet, MD, executive vice president of Clinical Operations at Community Health Systems. "We're particularly excited about how generative AI can automate time-consuming tasks, such as generating personalized patient letters and streamlining clinical documentation. This not only frees up valuable time for our clinicians but also allows us to improve the patient experience."

Intelligent assistants for prior authorization and claims processing
Gen AI can significantly streamline healthcare administration, particularly in the areas of prior authorization and claims processing. By acting as an intelligent assistant, it can pre-populate forms, analyze requests for potential issues, and suggest relevant clinical guidelines to strengthen submissions. This leads to faster approvals and improved patient care. Similarly, gen AI can assist with claims processing by verifying eligibility, reviewing medical necessity, and calculating payments, ultimately increasing efficiency and accuracy in healthcare operations.

"Imagine: prior authorizations that take seconds instead of days, claims processing streamlined by intelligent automation, and clinicians freed from tedious administrative tasks to focus on what truly matters - patient care," said Tony Farah, MD, EVP, chief medical and clinical transformation officer, Highmark Health. "Clinicians are the healthcare experts, and we want to support them with appropriate and actionable insights delivered by best-in-class technology. By harnessing the power of generative AI and collaborating with partners like Google Cloud, we're removing friction from the system for both clinicians and patients. This is the promise of Living Health, where clinical expertise and technology unite to create a simpler, more proactive and personalized healthcare experience for everyone."

Waystar is another company working with Google Cloud to leverage gen AI in its healthcare system payments software platform. The company has identified more than a dozen new gen AI capabilities to maximize reimbursements, prevent denials, and provide a strong patient financial experience.

"As healthcare providers face increasingly complex challenges, we are more optimistic than ever about technology's power to reduce administrative burdens," said Matt Hawkins, chief executive officer of Waystar. "Waystar is partnering with Google Cloud to harness the power of generative AI to deliver measurable ROI for providers, solve meaningful problems, unlock valuable insights, and ensure faster, more accurate payments."

Streamlining workflows for radiologists
AI can also assist in analyzing medical images like X-rays and CT scans to detect abnormalities, helping radiologists make faster and more accurate diagnoses. This can lead to earlier detection of diseases and better treatment outcomes. For example, Bayer announced that it is developing an AI Innovation Platform to support the developer teams of healthcare organizations when building AI-enabled apps aiming to assist radiologists by streamlining image analysis and automating tasks. This platform aims to improve diagnostic efficiency, reduce burnout, and ultimately enhance patient care.

"Radiology plays a vital role in healthcare, and the need to efficiently and accurately uncover insights and deliver solutions at scale that can improve patient outcomes has never been greater," said Nelson Ambrogio, president Radiology at Bayer. "Our goal is to make it easier for organizations to use AI with medical imaging to transform the growing amounts of data into valuable and impactful insights, saving radiologists time and helping them optimize their important work for the benefit of patients."

Survey methodology

This survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Google from Aug. 26 – Sept. 9, 2024, among 821 healthcare providers, 209 payors, and 2,079 consumers aged 18 and older in the U.S. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the data for the healthcare sample is accurate to within + /- 3.4 percentage points, the data for the payor sample is accurate to within +/- 6.7 percentage points, and the data for the consumer sample is accurate within +/- 2.7 percentage points using a 95% confidence level. For complete survey methodology, including subgroup sample sizes, please contact allison.ewell@harrispoll.com.

*Note on how the average hours spent on administrative tasks for the healthcare and payor sample was calculated: Respondents were first shown a list of administrative tasks and asked to select the tasks that they perform on a weekly basis (C-Suite and administrators were asked to select the tasks that are performed by clinicians/medical office staff/claims workers at their facility). Next, respondents were asked to enter the number of hours spent on each individual task. Respondents that did not select a task on the initial question (indicating that it is not a weekly task for them) were assigned a value of zero hours for that task. The total number of weekly hours spent on administrative tasks was capped at 60.

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