BURDA ON HEALTHCARE

# AI in Healthcare? I Don't Know About That

**By David Burda**
**March 18, 2025**

Maybe it's me. Maybe it's because I turn 65 next month and will officially enter the demographic of "65 or older." But I'm definitely picking up a vibe about consumers and healthcare AI. I'm sensing an inverse relationship between the adoption of AI technology by healthcare organizations and consumers' skepticism of AI use cases in healthcare. The more the healthcare system adopts AI, the less consumers trust AI.

Allow me to make my case.

In February 2023, the Pew Research Center released the results of a survey of more than 11,000 U.S. adults on their views of AI in healthcare and medicine. Here are some of the results:

- 60% said they would be uncomfortable with their healthcare provider relying on AI for their medical care.
- 75% said healthcare providers are moving too fast in the adoption of AI before fully understanding AI's risks to patients.
- 33% said using AI in medical care would make outcomes worse for patients.
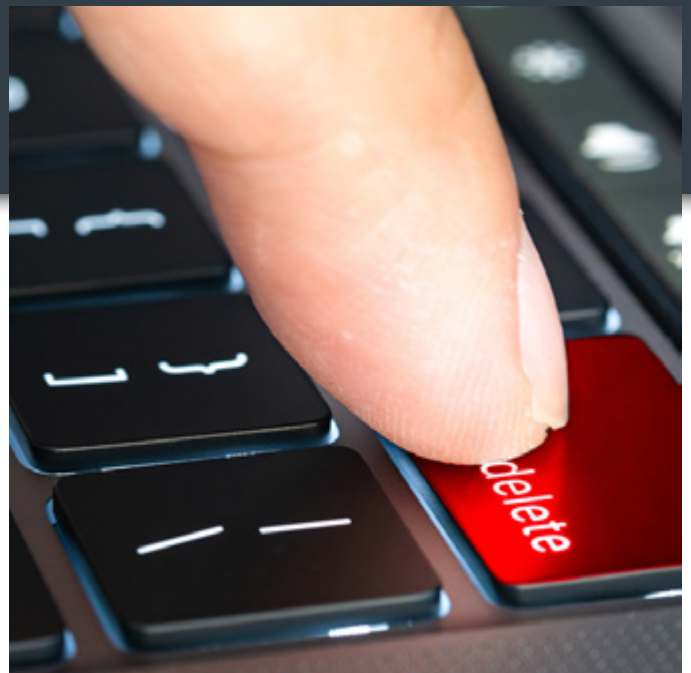
"These findings come as public attitudes toward AI continue to take shape, amid the ongoing adoption of AI technologies across industries and the accompanying national conversation about the benefits and risks that AI applications present for society," Pew said in its survey report.

The results are so February 2023. Surely consumers' thinking about AI in healthcare has evolved since then. Let's find out.

Last June, the Deloitte Center for Health Solutions released the results of its 2024 Health Care Consumer Survey. The survey asked more than 2,000 U.S adults how much they trust the use of generative AI tools in healthcare. Here's what those adults told Deloitte:

- 37% said they use generative AI tools for health and wellness, like looking up things online or using a chatbot. That's down from 40% in a similar survey Deloitte conducted the previous year.
- 30% said they don't trust the health and wellness information from generative AI healthcare tools. That's up from 23% the previous year.

"The future of gen AI in healthcare is full of potential — especially if consumer trust can be established and sustained," Deloitte said.

As my late, great father-in-law used to say, if ifs and buts were candy and nuts, what a wonderful world it would be. Let's keep looking for some candy and nuts.

Last August, a digital transformation consulting company called Customertimes released the results of a survey of 2,000 U.S. adults on AI in healthcare. Despite working hard to spin the results positively, here are a few spin-proof tidbits:

- 62% said AI will not replace doctors in the foreseeable future.
- 60% said they are not willing to follow medical advice generated by AI.
- 58% said AI ultimately will benefit healthcare providers more than patients.
- 52% said they were either "skeptical/concerned," "neutral" or "ethically opposed" to the adoption of AI in healthcare.
- 38% said AI will not be better than humans in diagnosing and treating medical conditions.
- 33% said they do not trust AI-powered healthcare at all.

Not exactly a ringing endorsement. Quite the opposite. But is this poll an outlier? Let's see.

Last October, NORC at the University of Chicago and the University of Michigan's Institute for Healthcare Policy and Innovation released the results of their survey of about 3,400 U.S. adults on how older adults find, understand and use health information.

Asked how much they trust health information generated by AI, 74% said "not very much" or "not at all." Another 25% said "some-what" with only 1% saying "very much."

"One possible way to improve access to and use of health information across levels of health literacy is through AI-based tools. Such AI applications are becoming increasingly common in health websites and apps," the survey report said. "Yet, these poll results show widespread distrust of AI-generated health information among older adults."

To be fair, older adults don't trust much of anything, AI included. So, let's keep looking.

In February, JAMA Network Open published a study by researchers with the University of Minnesota and the University of Michigan. They wanted to know how much patients trusted their health systems to use AI in patient care. To find out, they asked a representative sample of 2,039 U.S. adults age 18 or older.

Using a four-point scale with 1 being "not true" to 4 being "very true," the researchers asked the adults two questions:

- Do you trust your health system to use AI responsibly?

- Do you trust your health system to ensure that an AI tool won't harm you?

Some 65.8% expressed low trust in their health system to use AI responsibly, and 57.7% expressed low trust in their health system's ability to protect them from harm from an AI tool.

"Low trust in healthcare systems to use AI indicates a need for improved communication and investments in organizational trustworthiness," the researchers said.

I'm not sure what that means, but it doesn't sound good. Let's check in with patient advocacy groups as a proxy for consumers.

Earlier this month, ECRI, a patient safety organization, released its annual ranking of the Top 10 Patient Safety Concerns. Second on the list: "Insufficient Governance of Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare."

"Medical errors generated by AI could compromise patient safety and lead to misdiagnoses and inappropriate treatment decisions, which can cause injury or death," ECRI said in its report.

Well, you can't get any more final than death. Other than running out of space for this column.

The more healthcare organizations embrace AI-powered technology to do everything from optimizing their revenue cycle to improving their diagnostic and treatment acumen, the less consumers are thrilled with AI. I also think it reflects consumers' overall attitude toward the current healthcare system. They've

learned not to trust anything that a hospital, health system, physician, pharmacist, health plan or drug company tells them is good for them. (Nurses may be the only exception per my recent blog post, "Could You Have Been a Nurse?") AI is just another tool to screw them over somehow.

Consumers may have finally realized that the healthcare system has never been about them despite all the lofty mission, value and vision statements to the contrary. Only a customer revolution in healthcare will change that.

Thanks for reading.

## AUTHOR

**David Burda** began covering healthcare in 1983 and hasn't stopped since. Dave writes this monthly column "Burda on Healthcare," contributes weekly blog posts, manages our weekly newsletter 4sight Friday, and hosts our weekly Roundup podcast. Dave believes that healthcare is a business like any other business, and customers — patients — are king. If you do what's right for patients, good business results will follow.

Dave's personal experiences with the healthcare system both as a patient and family caregiver have shaped his point of view. It's also been shaped by covering the industry for 40 years as a reporter and editor. He worked at Modern Healthcare for 25 years, the last 11 as editor.

Prior to Modern Healthcare, he did stints at the American Medical Record Association (now AHIMA) and the American Hospital Association. After Modern Healthcare, he wrote a monthly column for Twin Cities Business explaining healthcare trends to a business audience, and he developed and executed content marketing plans for leading healthcare corporations as the editorial director for healthcare strategies at MSP Communications.

When he's not reading and writing about healthcare, Dave spends his time riding the trails of DuPage County, IL, on his bike, tending his vegetable garden and daydreaming about being a lobster fisherman in Maine. He lives in Wheaton, IL, with his lovely wife of 40 years and his three children, none of whom want to be journalists or lobster fishermen.

Visit 4sight.com/insights to read more from David Burda.