KEY TRENDS IN HEALTH

The 27th Milken Institute Global Conference delved into the theme "Shaping a Shared Future." Throughout the four-day event, MI Health launched key initiatives and highlighted ongoing programmatic work in more than two dozen panel discussions about topics spanning the health and health-care continuum. Leaders from across industries and sectors presented ideas for confronting the challenges we face in healthy aging, public health, biomedical science, food systems, and more.

This brief summarizes the **key trends, ideas, and solutions** discussed at the Milken Institute Global Conference 2024 to increase access to innovation and improve health outcomes.

PREVENTION FOR A HEALTHIER TOMORROW

Health-care expenditures are rising, driven in large part by the increasing burden of chronic diseases. Despite increased spending in the current system in the United States, health outcomes are poor. Solutions for better health outcomes include **shifting the focus to prevention** by improving access, affordability, and education and incentivizing R&D in preventive interventions.

Officially launched at Global Conference, the Milken Institute's **Project Prevent** will bring together partners and experts from various sectors to create a blueprint for deploying targeted health prevention approaches at scale to improve health outcomes. The initial work for this initiative will begin with projects in the US and UK to research models for innovative funding and financing of prevention, as well as design a pilot to test and scale real-world approaches to accelerate access and uptake of preventive health care. **Collaboration across sectors** is essential to drive prevention-focused, patient-centered innovation and implementation at scale.

View relevant Global Conference panels:

- Shaping the Future of Health: A Conversation with CDC Director Mandy Cohen
- Shaping the Future of Health: Prevention and Innovation for a Healthier Tomorrow

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: THE FUTURE IS NOW

Artificial intelligence (AI) is being applied to advance drug discovery and improve health delivery. It has the potential to enhance patient care by accelerating the diagnosis of disease, helping match patients to clinical trials, and providing real-time responses to patient questions. Successful implementation of AI in clinical settings requires addressing issues like funding, training, and **balancing discovery with safe, quality-controlled health care while rethinking AI's role in assisting rather than replacing humans**.

Even as AI use cases are expanding rapidly, concerns remain about bias and the possibility of exacerbating health disparities. Health leaders need transparency about the specific purpose the tool was trained for, so the right questions are asked, and findings are applied appropriately and safely. Debates around the ethics and regulations of AI in health care are plentiful. These include the **need to evaluate algorithms, data, and clinical oversight to ensure transparency and validation of models**. Science and industry are proceeding while awaiting guidelines from the government.

View relevant Global Conference panels:

- Is AI Paving the Way for the Next Scientific Revolution?
- Placing New Bets in Biomedical Innovation: Where Is the Next Cure?
- What's Trending in MedTech?

CANCER DIAGNOSTICS: A REVOLUTION IN EARLY DETECTION

Historically, there were limited modalities that could identify cancer. Now, innovative technologies that are potentially more accessible can detect cancer early before it advances, leading to better health outcomes. Invasive and sometimes painful **cervical cancer screenings can now be self-collected in the comfort of a person's home** and mailed to a lab for processing. Liquid biopsies and multi-cancer early-detection blood tests are emerging technologies that can **potentially detect one or more cancers with a single blood test, including for diseases like colorectal cancer. Many of these tests are being evaluated and approved by the Food and Drug Administration.**

As with any new technology, health equity and access are critical considerations, particularly with populations that bear the burden of disease and poor outcomes. Potential benefits must be balanced against risks like overdiagnosis, and evidence is needed on clinical utility and defined care delivery pathways.

Seven in ten Americans are behind on their recommended cancer screenings. Building trust within communities, particularly trusted providers that can recommend what screenings people are eligible for, can improve cancer screening uptake.

View a relevant Global Conference panel:

- The Cancer Diagnostics Revolution

CLINICAL TRIALS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Patient engagement throughout the product development life cycle—from design to evidence generation—is important for ensuring treatments meet patients' needs. Building trust with diverse communities is vital for successful clinical research that is generalizable to all populations and requires long-term community engagement and addressing historical harms. **Involving underserved communities in all stages of research, from question formulation to dissemination of results,** is essential for addressing health disparities.

Clinical trials must be simplified and accessible for diverse patients and clinicians in various settings. Technology can help engage communities when designed and disseminated in culturally appropriate ways, but relationships are still the most significant building block. By **increasing infrastructure for community care**, social determinants of health that prevent people from receiving proper care can be addressed. Improving data interoperability, standardization, and the use of real-world data sources can transform clinical research by making it more affordable, scalable, and sustainable. Innovations in manufacturing, reimbursement models, and coordinated government efforts could help address the challenge of high costs for new therapies.

Milken Institute's FasterCures launched a new multi-stakeholder initiative, Enabling Networks of Research Infrastructure for Community Health through Clinical Trials (**ENRICH-CT**), which focuses on driving dialogue and advancing practical solutions for ways the public and private sectors can support more infrastructure in the US for more inclusive clinical research.

View relevant Global Conference panels:

- [Health Economics Driving New Investments](#)
- [Revolutionizing Research: Democratizing Clinical Trials](#)

CONNECTED CAREGIVING

An increasing number of family members, including millions of young adults, are taking on caregiving roles for aging parents, grandparents, and other relatives. Driven by fragmented health and social care systems, increasing prevalence of chronic disease, shortage of direct care workers, and preference for aging in place, more care is being delivered in the home. Innovative solutions and technologies, such as social robots, wearables, and remote patient monitoring that **integrate health care, housing, and social services,** are critical to supporting caregivers and patients alike with **improved care coordination**. Not only does this address individual needs more holistically, but it can reduce unnecessary costs over the long run.

View a relevant Global Conference panel:

- [Silver Threads: Weaving the Caregiving Tapestry](#)

EMPLOYERS ADVANCING HEALTH

Workforce health, wellness, and resiliency are at the heart of achieving and maintaining organizational success. Employers that support the whole-person health of their workforce have a competitive advantage in attracting and retaining talent. This commitment includes recognizing not only the needs of the individual employees but also the care duties they have outside of work for their children and/or aging loved ones.

Leaders must build trust between employers and employees to address health inequities and encourage engagement in wellness programs and benefits designed to advance their long-term financial security. **Communication is key to fostering a culture of openness**. Empathy and role modeling from leaders can reduce the stigma around mental health and encourage employees to access care.

Partnerships among employers, insurers, and providers can accelerate health-care innovation, drive accountability for quality, reduce health-care costs, and improve health equity. For employers, solutions include **implementing a manager effectiveness index, holding managers accountable for inclusion, and addressing employee feedback through surveys**. For employees, outreach campaigns about benefit offerings and education on health plan options are necessary to improve health-care decision-making and outcomes. Read *Reimagining the Future of Employer-Sponsored Health Care to Drive Value: Survey Insights* to learn more about employers' attitudes to advancing health.

View a relevant Global Conference panel:

- [The Value of Workforce Resiliency: Employers Advancing Health while Driving Economic Growth](#)

FUTURE OF FOOD RETAIL AND FOOD SYSTEMS

Customers drive the trends in food retail. In response, the food retail industry is constantly adapting to meet the priorities of the customer as they relate to health and wellness, sustainability, convenience, and more. **Technology helps facilitate a more customer-centric experience that makes the healthier choice, the easier choice** and improves efficiencies and resilience along the supply chain. Partnerships are vital to improving personal and planetary health, with large food retailers collaborating with community-based organizations to leverage technology to divert food waste.

Transforming the food system to one that is nutritious, sustainable, resilient, and equitable requires an enormous amount of public, private, and philanthropic capital but significantly less than the current food system is costing now in terms of

negative health and environmental outcomes. Climate change is altering the agricultural landscape, shifting how much food can be produced and where, so investments to adapt and diversify food production sustainably are necessary to support growing global nutrition needs. To encourage more food systems investments, philanthropic capital can help level the playing field by de-risking the capital stack, particularly for groups or areas that have historically not received enough investment. **Over the long term, investment in food systems assets, such as farmland, to add value** through environmentally, socially, nutritionally, and financially beneficial shifts can produce positive returns for investors, producers, and consumers.

View relevant Global Conference panels:

- Food Systems as an Asset Class: Financing a Sustainable Future
- The Future of Food Retail

PRECISION MEDICINE AND LIVING ENVIRONMENTS FOR GREATER LONGEVITY

The public and private sectors are increasing their investment in longevity science and aging research. Advancements in artificial intelligence, diagnostics, and "omic" technologies are accelerating research capabilities and clinical trial design.

There is growing interest in **precision medicine using biomarkers that target molecular mechanisms of aging and preventive approaches** rather than treating individual diseases at later stages. New classes of drugs, like GLP-1 agonists, demonstrate the potential for delaying multiple aging-related diseases and extending healthspan, the number of years living in relatively good health. Work has begun to explore if reprogramming epigenetics through gene therapies could reset a person's biological age. As important, our living environment—from the air we breathe to access to green spaces and nutritious foods and community design that fosters social interaction—can impact longevity.

At the individual and community level, solutions to increase longevity include 1) lifestyle interventions (such as following the dietary and exercise habits and regular social interaction among people living in Blue Zones, who live longer than average and with lower rates of chronic diseases, and environmental changes to make healthy choices easier through policies targeting urban planning, food choice architecture, workplaces, etc.) and 2) incentivizing healthy behaviors and prevention through programs, taxes, and changing social norms around health priorities.

View a relevant Global Conference panel:

- Longevity Lab: Can You Live to 100?

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Rising rates of depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, self-harm, and other mental health concerns have resulted in a youth mental health crisis. Digital media has contributed to these mental health challenges as daily screen time has reached unprecedented levels. In the policy arena, there are calls for **greater regulation of technology/social media companies, standards around age-appropriate digital content, and legislation to protect youth online**. Without federal government regulation, public-private partnerships are providing solutions and tools to help youth and parents alike navigate this experience. In some cases, industry is stepping up to self-regulate.

View a relevant Global Conference panel:

- Digital Media and Youth Mental Health

Additional health reports released during Global Conference include:

- [Employer Investments in Digital, Whole-Person Health for Substance Use Disorders](#)
- [Financing Early Warning Systems in Brazil, Indonesia, and Kenya](#)
- [Modernizing Care for Obesity as a Chronic Disease: A How-To Guide for Employers](#)
- [Toward a National Action Plan for Achieving Diversity in Clinical Trials](#)

Connect with MI Health to learn more about our work in these areas and ways to engage.

Contact MIHealth@milkeninstitute.org