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# San Francisco Dispatch: Transforming the Business and Culture of Healthcare

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This year's FORTUNE Brainstorm Health conference focused on the theme of "Venturing Through the Unknown" – a nod to the uncertainty the healthcare industry has wrestled with in recent years.

I represented Brunswick's San Francisco office at the two-day conference in Los Angeles, where it was made clear that nobody in the healthcare space is waiting for certainty to seek solutions for a healthier future. From AI-enabled stethoscopes and male birth control to the menopause market, innovation was in full swing.

The industry's most powerful business and science leaders gathered to discuss pressing global health issues and the solutions that have the power to transform lives. And given the conference's LA location, the two-day event appropriately featured a laundry list of A-list speakers and panelists.

## The power of public-private partnerships

Chelsea Clinton kicked off the conference by announcing the launch of what she called "the largest childhood immunization effort ever." Over the next 18 months, supported by partners like the World Health Organization and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, "The Big Catch-up" aims to vaccinate millions of children around the world against preventable diseases with the hope of restoring immunization progress lost during the pandemic.

### Important stats:

- In 2021 alone, more than 25 million children missed at least one vaccination, according to WHO.
- As a result, outbreaks of diseases including measles, diphtheria, polio and yellow fever have become more prevalent and severe.

Clinton, who is vice chair of the Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI), said she hopes that the model of public-private partnerships will continue to play a role in combatting scientific misinformation and developing innovative care delivery and training modules for frontline nurses, as well as more midwife and OBGYN care in underserved communities.

## The future of reproductive and women's health

Beyond the dramatic inequities women experience throughout the healthcare ecosystem, panel after panel at the conference emphasized the bottom-line benefits of investing in women's health and reproductive care.

"Women's health is not just about women, it's human health," said Alyssa Jaffee, a partner at 7wireVentures, an early-stage health care venture fund based in Chicago. "Women are over 50% of our population, yet we make 80% of health care buying decisions."

Panelists pointed out that reproductive health would benefit from more options for men. Male birth control was raised as one solution: "I have a teenage son and I think that family planning is an important, gender-neutral activity," said Dr. Sandra Milligan, head of research and development for Organon, a pharmaceutical company focused on women's health. Milligan explained that male contraception options would give men more autonomy, and after the overturn of *Roe v. Wade* and subsequent uncertainty surrounding abortion pill mifepristone, there is demand: According to the Cleveland Clinic Center for Male Fertility, vasectomy inquiries increased 2.5-fold in July 2022 compared to July 2021.

Menopause and resources for aging was an "ah hah" moment at the conference. Actress Judy Greer, a founding partner at Wile, a menopause-focused company, said the medical community needs to be held accountable for more comprehensive menopause education in medical schools and overall awareness.

### Important stats:

- The global menopause market was \$15.4 billion in 2021 and is projected to be \$24.4 billion by 2030, according to a report by Grand View Research.
- Each year, 1.3 million women in the US begin to experience symptoms like brain fog, hot flashes and mood swings.
- A 2019 UK survey found 900,000 women left their jobs because they felt menopause hurt their ability to perform.

## Risks and rewards of AI and innovation

It's hard to have any forward-looking conversation these days without considering AI's potential impact. And when it comes to healthcare, the stakes – namely, human lives – are especially high.

Connor Landgraf, the CEO of health tech company Eko, used a mannequin on stage to demonstrate how AI in concert with one of the most common medical tools – a stethoscope – can be used to save lives. Eko is launching a new platform to connect their smart stethoscopes to a database trained to recognize 80,000 unique heart sounds with the goal of identifying structural murmurs. The hope is that the AI-powered smart stethoscope can help doctors at the primary care level catch the early signs of heart disease.

Fittingly, the next discussion was about the role of regulators on responsible AI in healthcare. Dr. Monique Smith, an ER physician and director of design and innovation at Rock Health, was asked if she was worried about AI medical tools outperforming providers. Without hesitation, and to much applause, she said, "I don't worry about my job stability. One, because I resuscitate patients and no algorithm is going to do chest compressions for you! But also because there's this element of human interaction that matters."

### Important observations:

- Diversity in data sets is critical to make AI work for human health.

- AI should be used as an assistant to help physicians make medical decisions, not as the first-line provider of care.
- AI could potentially serve as a tool that helps patients find and go to the doctor in the first place. Such a tool, similar to behavioral modeling used in retail, could remove barriers to care and create incentives for people to come in for checkups, tests and medications.

### **To continue the conversation:**

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