SameSky Health.

AI: An accelerated path to health equity

Creating **cultural connections** for a **healthier**, more **equitable** world.

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Unlocking the potential of AI to advance health equity and improve health outcomes.

Despite years of attention focused on health equity, it's clear that we still have a great deal of work ahead of us. Health plan members continue to experience health disparities that have negative effects on their well-being and quality of life. And while we are making progress, it's equally clear that we are not going to solve these major challenges if we cannot quantify and measure the impact of the actions we take.

Fortunately, rapid advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) are providing new opportunities to make progress. For example, one promising application of AI is the ability to scale personalized, culturally tailored content for diverse communities across the country. This new capability expands access to information and resources that support better health outcomes.

Throughout this paper, we will offer several additional examples of the potential of AI to advance health equity.

Opportunities at the crossroads of health equity and technology

The healthcare industry has been working to determine the role of AI in technology for some time. At SameSky Health, we've come to realize that advanced technologies can help us understand who each member is at a deeper level, better understand how to deploy resources at scale to address disparities, and measure and quantify these efforts.

Making sure that outcomes are increasing the health of underserved communities requires an immense amount of data, including risk data, statistical analyses, EHR/EMR (electronic health/electronic medical record) data, and quality data. Technology is deployed to track, measure, and analyze the data at scale for plans that may be managing millions of members. AI has the potential to streamline and accelerate these data-intensive tasks.

While many health plans and health systems are just getting started with AI efforts, now is the time to incorporate health-equity-related objectives and analyses with training data to make sure they're preventing bias.

In addition to plan-initiated applications of AI, members themselves have also expressed interest in leveraging AI to manage their health and drive convenient care.[1] For example, organizations that deployed chatbots as part of their COVID-19 hotlines found those that seemed human-like, were competent, and referred members to resources that answered their questions, were more highly rated.[1]

Beyond use cases, however, as the potential for AI grows and the industry moves forward, it's essential that AI becomes an advocate for health equity, rather than an enabler (or amplifier) of biases that cause disparities.

We believe that AI can accelerate progress toward a future state with the following characteristics:

Personalization
When engagement, messaging, and experience don't represent a particular member's background and context, it makes them feel like who they are doesn't matter. AI now enables personalization that accounts for different life journeys and differing abilities to engage in care.

Scalability
One-size-fits-all processes don't fit for health plans that have tens of thousands, or even tens of millions of members. AI now enables payers to scale their collection of all relevant information that uniquely affects each member, and design outreach and solutions that are tailored to individual member needs.

Efficiency
Improving productivity has been one of the earliest recognized benefits of AI. It can automate and standardize processes, answer the phone, review medical records, reduce errors, improve decision-making, streamline access to care, and enhance patient/member engagement.[2] Generative AI has the potential to improve efficiencies and reduce costs for payers.[3]

Measurability
AI creates the ability to more rapidly identify and address challenges related to disparities, providing new benchmarks for measuring progress.

Driving personalized experiences that improve health outcomes

AI is still in its infancy when it comes to addressing health equity, but it offers many new ways for health plans to engage members.[4] It has the ability to deliver complicated, contextual information to members rapidly — and at scale.[5] Analyzing large data sets helps connect content, inclusion criteria, and cultural algorithms, then ties them to outcomes.

Additionally, natural language processing can automate the classification of inbound messages from members. This is a revolutionary technology that — if used correctly — can greatly accelerate delivering the best information, through the most optimal channel, to the people who need it most.

Today's AI provides remarkable improvements in its ability to deliver personalized member engagement at scale. It can enable additional customization in member outreach, including the ability to rapidly create tailored, culturally nuanced messaging that better resonates with each person's unique background. It can help choose the best modalities, styles, and frequency of messaging. Additionally, advanced deployments have the ability to predictively offer member tools, resources, and care.

Moreover, new AI-enabled capabilities can help create an interconnected experience that combines all of a member's health benefits, providers, and other services (tools, resources, community resources, etc.) to create more holistic care.

AI also can help streamline the payer-provider relationship by standardizing processes, enhancing data exchange, and improving utilization review and management.[6]

Best practices for personalizing member experiences

As health plans evaluate and deploy AI in pursuit of their health equity goals, we offer these best practices:

- Look at AI as a continuous, evolutionary process — not "one and done."[7]

- Make sure you have good, clean training data that represents all of your populations.[7]

- Have data scientists, engineers, and business strategists ask extensive questions early on. These include: "How are biases being measured?", "What steps are being taken to mitigate them?", and, "Have you been thinking about health equity in your build and implementation?"

- Establish expectations that can evolve with the technology. For example, what you deploy is a first version; it will improve over time as it learns from the inputs you provide.

- Continuously evaluate whether the performance of the solution matches expectations.

- Be ready and able to address discrepancies in the underlying data.

- Deploy slowly.

- Establish key performance indicators (KPIs) for the efficacy of the AI.

- Ensure that no biases are introduced. Measure distributions and data that look at different populations and produce different outcomes than the model gives.

- Categorize and test different ways in which there could be biases that you don't yet know about. For example, is the model more likely to recognize a name if it's a female name versus a male name, or if it's a surname that's less common in the United States?

- Connect your AI objectives to the actual execution of the day-to-day business to realize the benefits much more quickly. Include software engineering, data analysis, content development, operations, and all other relevant teams.

- Be wary of overpromising.

How we're leveraging AI technology at SameSky Health

Our focused, selective use of AI enables our CultureGuide® solution to scale personalized, culturally tailored content for diverse communities across the country, expanding access to information and resources that support better outcomes.

We apply AI that leverages human- and data-driven insights to support our creation of multiple iterations of personalized content — creating the best opportunity to improve member connections and relationships.

Additionally, we continuously enhance and refine the performance of our CultureGuide Pathways — used to drive member outreach — based on previous member interactions, and to help us accelerate new content development. This enables us to quickly develop and field-test new content, and to target new subject areas such as new Focus Pathways that address specific gaps in care and other health plan priorities.

The most important metrics are those that focus on the people we serve:

- A recent client engagement motivated 19% of members in a Managed Medicaid plan to complete their Annual Wellness Visit over 12 months. That result was **three times better** than the client expected.

- In another client engagement, we reached out to Medicare Advantage members who hadn't seen a doctor in 16 months or more. After the yearlong program, **58% of members** had completed an Annual Wellness Visit.

What is equitable AI?

Equitable AI means not causing any harm or propagating any biases.
It's based on four fundamental pillars:

Fairness
Ensure there is no disparate impact on underrepresented populations.

Transparency
Understand what decisions are being made by the model.

Interpretability
Understand what information the model uses to make decisions.

Privacy
Use member information appropriately in ways that the member understands in accordance with informed consent.

Achieving equitable AI

To achieve the vision of health equity, we need to treat everyone like who they are matters, and we need technology to help us reach that goal. AI is a revolutionary tool that can provide a new level of health equity at scale.

There's little question that the industry is at a tipping point with AI. Health plans now have access to new tools and capabilities to overcome barriers that have limited health equity progress in the past, while providing numerous potential ancillary benefits in the process — including the ability to deliver personalized, contextual information to millions of members.

But in deploying these new capabilities, the goal must always be eliminating existing disparities while preventing new biases from seeping in. This requires a proactive approach to checking for quality, testing the results, and then adjusting accordingly.

The AI movement is pushing forward. Let's innovate responsibly and be vigilant in looking for ways to further eliminate biases while providing a better member experience — one that drives better health outcomes for everyone.

Visit sameskyhealth.com to learn more about the role of AI in healthcare and opportunities to advance health equity.

www.sameskyhealth.com

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The following resources were referenced in the preparation of this white paper:

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SameSky Health.

SameSky Health is a cultural experience company that removes barriers to care and forms meaningful relationships to bring people to health. We guide health plan members on their annual wellness journeys by building trusted relationships that encourage dignity, autonomy, and companionship as they navigate disparate life experiences within a complex healthcare system.

Launched in 2017, SameSky Health engages 2.3 million+ members across 15 states, in 25+ different languages. The company's cultural expertise and technology-based solutions enable health plans to grow member engagement, improve quality measures and increase overall health outcomes. We are on a mission to create cultural connections for a healthier, more equitable world. SameSky Health is based in North Hollywood, CA. To learn more, visit www.sameskyhealth.com.