

A wide-angle photograph of a winding asphalt road through a mountain valley. The road curves from the foreground into the distance, flanked by green hills and steep, rocky mountains. The sky is hazy with a warm, golden light from the setting or rising sun, creating a soft glow over the landscape. The overall mood is serene and expansive.

# The pos-Covid path for healthcare.

Report

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 CW1



# Improving health.

## AI & Pandemic. What is the new path forward?

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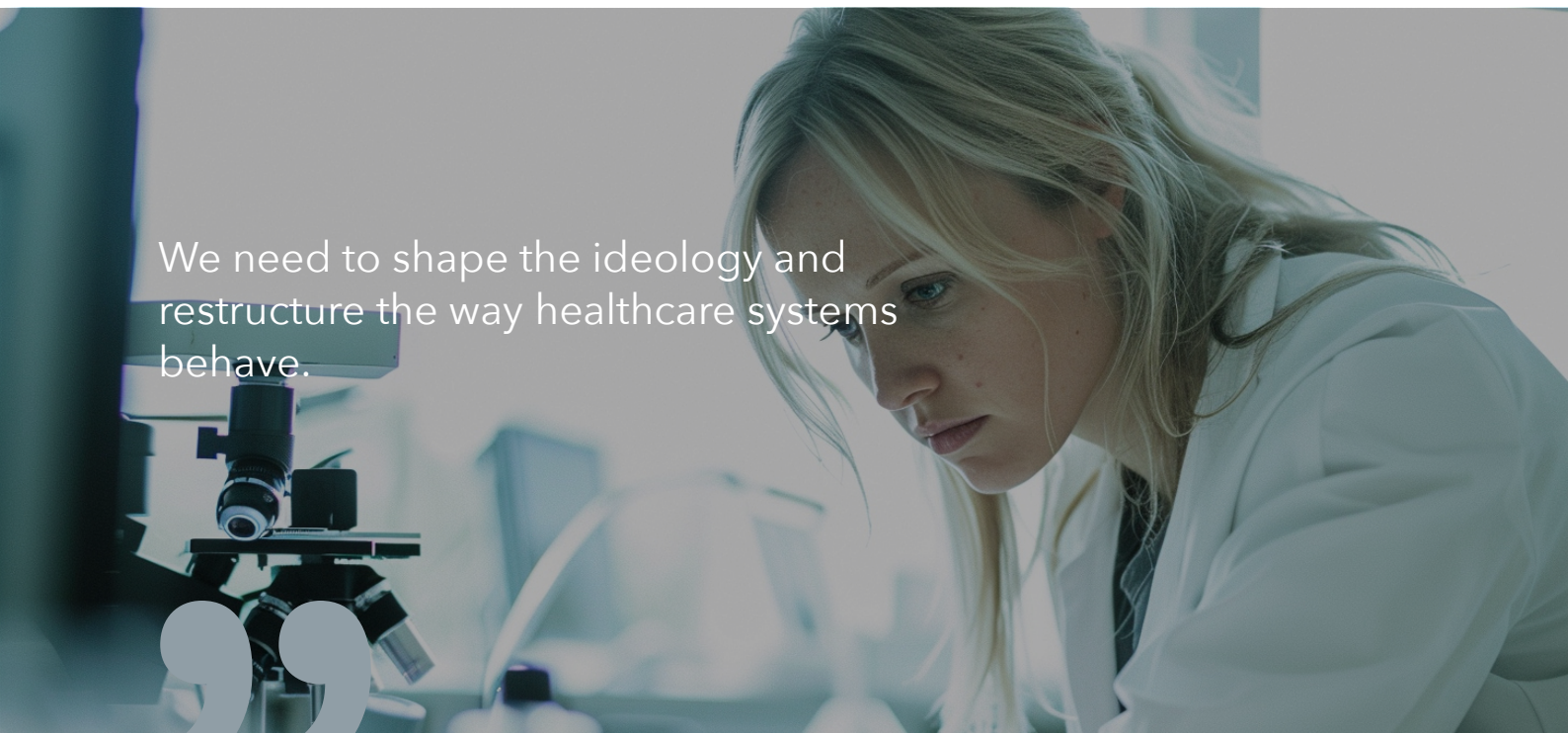


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The healthcare industry is experiencing unprecedented change driven by technological advancements, evolving patient expectations, regulatory reforms, and shifting market dynamics. As a result, healthcare organizations need to adapt, transform, and stay ahead on the constant evolving paradigm

Strategic advisory firms, such as CW1, play a crucial role in assisting these organisations in navigating these challenges and shaping their future trajectory, as they collaborate

closely with their clients to develop strategic visions that align with their core values and long-term objectives, however one thing needs to be established first. The current healthcare systems are broken, placing extreme innovative technology such as AI will not fix the current problems that are being transversal to all the hospitals in Europe.



We need to shape the ideology and restructure the way healthcare systems behave.



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# Change needs to happen

## Executive Summary

The post-COVID era makes a shift in the current paradigm, opening doors to strategic planning and disruptive approaches for healthcare providers to thrive. This report aims to explore the path for healthcare providers and medtechs to become industry disruptors, with a specific focus on reducing ambulant patients by rerouting them to different healthcare stakeholders.

This is marked by a significant shift in patient preferences that has been observed in some of CW1 surveys, leading to an anticipated

# Before talking about AI



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increase in outpatient volumes. A remarkable 95% of healthcare leaders project a rise in outpatient volumes under 2023, with 40% expecting a substantial increase of 10% or more. Conversely, inpatient volumes are expected to decline, with 41% of leaders reporting a decrease, and 17% projecting a decline of 10% or more.

Healthcare providers must prioritize disruption. The importance of person-centered care becomes central, by emphasizing the need to tailor services to meet the unique needs and preferences of individual patients. Health needs to be delivered outside traditional hospital settings, providing convenient and accessible healthcare options. Creating sustainable business models is paramount to long-term success and financial resiliency.

## The current Situation

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a paradigm shift in how healthcare is delivered

The COVID-19 pandemic caused chaos that led to a big change. Suddenly governments started to rethink how healthcare is delivered, by highlighting vulnerabilities and inefficiencies within existing healthcare systems, while creating a pressing need for innovative and disruptive approaches to address the challenges.

The repercussions of the pandemic, such as changes in patient preferences and the strain on healthcare resources, require a strategic reevaluation of traditional healthcare models.



Providers such as hospitals must adopt other types of innovation and disruption to overcome the obstacles posed by the new normal. The post-COVID era demands a forward-thinking mindset, where organisations are proactive in identifying and capitalising on emerging opportunities. They need (and are obliged) to transform their operations, enhance patient experiences, and achieve sustainable growth in an increasingly competitive landscape.

This report encompasses the exploration of strategic planning and disruptive strategies for health companies in the post-COVID era. It specifically focuses on the assumption of rerouting outpatients patients from hospitals to other existing solutions and highlights the significance of strategic growth efforts centered around person-centred care. The report will analyse current trends, identify key areas for investment and hiring, and provide actionable recommendations for health companies to become disruptors in the industry.

This report aims to guide health companies towards strategic success and resilience in the post-COVID healthcare landscape.







# Current Trends in Outpatient and Inpatient volumes

## 2023 Assumption

Outpatient volumes may skyrocket and healthcare leaders are predicting a staggering 95% upward trend, can your organisation afford to be left behind?

## The Pre- and pos-Covid era


The pandemic changed the healthcare sector thinking. A fast response was required when the pandemic struck Europe and the US in September 2020, and it continued to evolve until reaching its peak in March 2022. The world has survived, but it was evident that changes were necessary.

It's clear that the post-COVID era demands a strategic response, with 40% of industry pioneers anticipating jumps of 10% or more during 2023. As the demand for ambulatory care surges, healthcare providers must adapt and optimise their services, signalling a shift in how patients seek and perceive healthcare treatment. In an effort to avoid lengthy waiting times and

appointments for medical treatment, more individuals should opt for looking other alternatives. The choice should be driven by the relatively lower cost compared to traditional private alternatives, as well as the convenience of not having to visit and queuing for many hours at a hospital.

Healthcare leaders project that outpatient volumes will continue to increase, with a staggering 95% expecting an upward trend. This surge in outpatient care has significant implications for health companies, as it requires them to adapt and transform themselves.





It's clear that the post-COVID era demands a strategic response, with 40% of

## Decrease in inpatient volumes and its challenges.

On March 2 2023, in a report published by the Healthcare Financial Management Association (HFMA) in Illinois, US, the insight of approximately 41% of healthcare leaders reported a decrease in inpatient volumes, with 17% projecting a decline of 10% or more, created an alarm for a change.

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This decrease poses multiple harsh challenges for healthcare providers, as they deal with the need to optimise their operations in order to improve their financial budgets, which got affected by the pandemic.

The shift from inpatient to outpatient care requires a strategic reevaluation of healthcare delivery models, with a focus on promoting effective care coordination, seamless transitions between care settings, and enhanced patient engagement. Adjusting and adapting to this decrease in inpatient volumes requires health companies to rethink their service offerings, optimise capacity utilisation, and allocate resources to align with the changing demand dynamics.

## **The impact on market dynamics and shifts in patient preferences**

These trends in outpatient and inpatient volumes reflect market dynamics and shifts in patient preferences. With the evolution of telemedicine and Medtech, as well the continuous privatization of medical doctors and clinics, multiple solutions appear daily in the market influencing Patients preferences.

Patients are increasingly seeking convenient accessible, and personalised healthcare options. Factors such as the desire for greater autonomy, convenience, and cost- effectiveness have contributed to the growing demand for outpatient services. Moreover, speed has emerged as a significant factor influencing patient decisions, and the ability to instantly access professionals like doctors or nurses further enhances the preference for telemedicine systems.

Understanding these market dynamics and patient preferences is essential for healthcare providers to devise effective strategies that cater to evolving healthcare needs while maintaining high-quality care standards.



# Strategic planning for disruptive growth

Emphasizing person-centered care, optimizing ambulatory services, creating sustainable business models, attracting and retaining patients, and ensuring financial resiliency, health companies can position themselves at the forefront of innovation and drive transformative change.

The patient-centric approach involves tailoring healthcare services to meet the needs, preferences, and goals of outpatients, specifically focusing on improving patient satisfaction, enhance outcomes, and build stronger patient-provider relationships.

Strategic planning is crucial for

implementing patient-centered care effectively. By developing clear objectives and measurable goals, organizations can ensure that their initiatives align with the principles of patient-centered care.

Key components of patient-centered care strategies include:

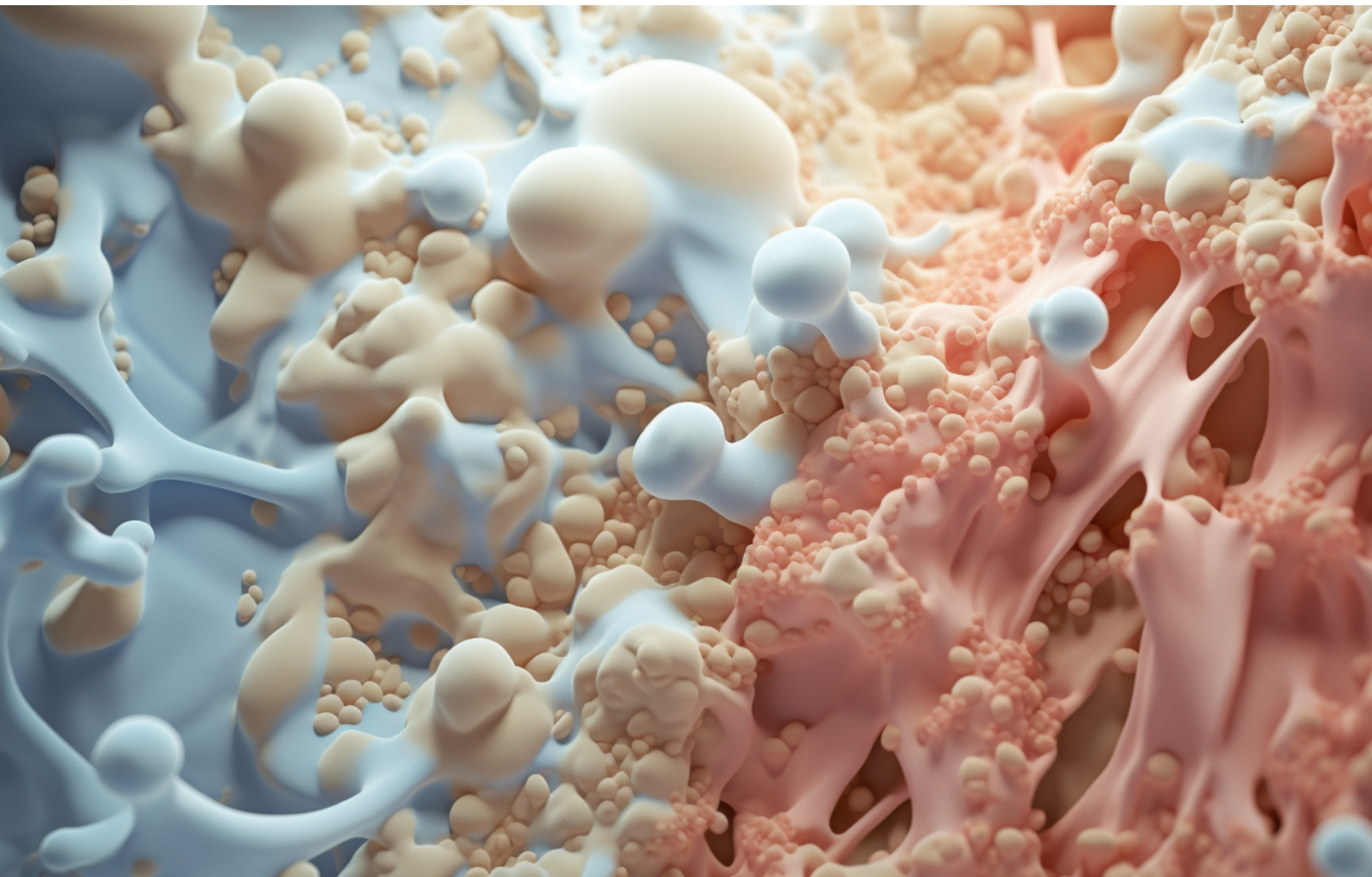


- **Personalized care plans,** Collaborating with patients to create customized treatment plans that consider their unique circumstances, treatment preferences, and goals. For example, a cancer patient may have specific preferences for alternative therapies alongside conventional treatments.



**In the new reality, healthcare organizations must prioritize person-centered healthcare as a fundamental cornerstone of their strategic planning.**

- ➔ • **Shared decision-making:** Engaging in open and transparent discussions with patients, presenting all available options, risks, and benefits. This approach involves involving patients in the decision-making process to select the most suitable treatment options. For instance, a patient with a chronic condition may discuss different treatment approaches, considering factors like lifestyle impact and long-term prognosis.
- ➔ • **Comprehensive patient engagement initiatives:** Implementing various activities to actively involve patients in their healthcare journey. This may include providing educational resources, remote monitoring options, and self-management tools. For instance, developing a mobile app that allows patients to track their health metrics, access educational materials, and communicate with their healthcare team.





## Excellence in ambulatory services as a focus area

Given the growing demand for outpatient care ambulatory services scope and service-offer need to be increased, as ensuring multiple strategies and initiatives that focus on expanding and optimizing outpatient clinics, leveraging telehealth and digital care technologies. These approaches meet patient expectations and improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness in the delivery of healthcare services.

- Increasing the capacity of existing outpatient clinics or establishing new clinics in strategic locations to accommodate the rising patient demand.
- Enhancing the physical infrastructure and facilities of outpatient clinics to create a comfortable and patient-friendly environment.
- Collaborating with external parties to ensure the diagnostics are performed outside the clinic and faster.
- Recruiting and retaining skilled healthcare professionals, including physicians, nurses, and support staff, to ensure quality care delivery.
- Implementing telehealth solutions that enable remote consultations, virtual visits, and remote monitoring for patients who prefer or require healthcare services from the comfort of their homes.
- Integrating electronic health records (EHR) systems to facilitate seamless information exchange and continuity of care across different care settings.
- Implementing remote patient monitoring devices and wearable technologies to enable continuous monitoring of vital signs and health parameters, facilitating proactive interventions and early detection of health issues.
- Implementing care coordination platforms or systems that facilitate the exchange of patient information, care plans, and treatment updates across different healthcare providers and settings, while obeying to existing local regulation and GDPR.
- Engaging in multidisciplinary team-based care models to promote collaboration and coordination among healthcare professionals involved in a patient's care.
- Providing comprehensive discharge planning and patient education to ensure that patients understand their care plans, medications, and follow-up appointments after receiving outpatient services.

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These meet patient expectations for convenience and personalised care and improves overall efficiency and cost-effectiveness in healthcare delivery. Ultimately, prioritising excellence in ambulatory services enables organisations to adapt to the changing healthcare landscape and deliver optimal patient-centred care.



## Creating sustainable business models

Thriving health organisations in the post-COVID era, developed sustainable business models around innovation, by aligning financial and operational strategies to ensure long-term viability and resilience.

Organizations should explore alternative payment models, value-based care arrangements, and partnerships that promote shared savings and risk-sharing. With so many new players appearing in the market on the daily basis, an emphasis on key-collaborations and key-partnerships is crucial to create disruption on traditional models.

The focus on financial sustainability makes health companies navigate the challenges of a volatile healthcare landscape and continue to deliver high-quality care.



## Attracting and retaining patients

Disruptors in the industry must actively attract and retain patients. A comprehensive marketing and patient acquisition strategy that highlights the unique value proposition and differentiated services offered will not suffice. Due to the current innovation engaging patients through targeted communication, personalized experiences, and innovative care delivery models can help build loyalty and foster long-term relationships, however organisations need to dive deeper and understand customer development cycles.

Organizations should also leverage data and analytics to gain insights into patient preferences and tailor their services accordingly.

## Financial resiliency in a volatile era

The rapidly evolving landscape forces financial resiliency upon health companies. Strategic planning should include robust financial management strategies, such as optimizing revenue cycle processes, exploring new revenue streams, and implementing cost control measures.

Financial scenarios are a dangerous practice to keep doing on the traditional way. Embracing digital technologies and automation can improve operational efficiency and reduce administrative costs. Organizations should also establish contingency plans and risk mitigation strategies to proactively address potential disruptions and ensure financial stability.



# Key areas for investing and hiring

Investing in the recruitment and retention of advanced practitioners can enhance the capacity of health organizations to meet the growing demand for ambulatory care while maintaining clinical excellence.

**.Nurse practitioners and physician assistants, possess the expertise and qualifications to deliver high-quality care in outpatient settings.**

As the demand for outpatient services continues to rise, health companies must recognize the critical role of advanced practitioners. Skilled professionals, such as nurse practitioners and physician assistants, possess the expertise and qualifications to deliver high-quality care in outpatient settings, when of

course supervised by medical doctors to obey the regulation. Nevertheless, the current innovation in IVDs and Digital transformation make this line of regulation be bended. Investing in the recruitment and retention of advanced practitioners can enhance the capacity of health organizations to meet the growing demand for ambulatory care while maintaining clinical excellence.

### **Addressing the growing need for behavioral health providers**

Mental health and well-being is areas that recently started being more addressed. This growing need should influence the hiring of behavioral health providers. These professionals, including psychologists, therapists, and counselors, play a crucial role in delivering comprehensive and integrated care. Another trend are Digital care and telehealth providers that have emerged as vital components of healthcare delivery.

Investing in robust digital care platforms and telehealth solutions enables health companies to expand their reach, improve access to care, and enhance patient engagement.

### **Automation of revenue cycle processes**

Revenue cycle processes became an essential piece - like the queen in a chessboard - for the health organisations. The implementation of advanced technologies and intelligent automation can streamline billing, coding, claims processing, and revenue management. Manual errors, accelerating reimbursement cycles, and improving revenue capture, are processes that automation can optimise in order to enhance the efficiency and accuracy of financial operations, ultimately contributing to the financial resiliency of the organization.

As health companies embrace digital transformation, investing in talent acquisition and development in IT and financial areas equip organizations with the expertise to drive technological innovation, manage complex coding and billing requirements, and optimize revenue cycle processes.

Building a strong workforce in these critical domains enables health companies to leverage technology effectively, streamline operations, and stay ahead of industry trends.





# Execution and implementation

## Roadmap

### **A. Developing a comprehensive strategic plan**

To effectively implement disruptive strategies, health companies must develop a comprehensive strategic plan that outlines clear goals, objectives, and action steps. This plan should incorporate insights from market research, industry trends, and internal assessments.

### **B. Establishing key performance indicators and benchmarks**

Measuring progress and success is vital. Organisations leverage key performance indicators (KPIs) and benchmarks to track the impact of their strategic initiatives. These metrics include patient satisfaction scores, reduction in hospital readmissions, improved financial performance, or increased market share.

### **C. Aligning organizational structure and processes**

Organisations should ensure that roles, responsibilities, and reporting lines are clearly defined and understood.

Fostering crossfunctional collaboration and breaking down silos ,makes organizations to create an agile and cohesive environment conducive to innovation and execution.

### **D. Engaging stakeholders and fostering a culture of innovation**

Successful execution depends on stakeholder engagement and creating a culture of innovation. Actively involving key stakeholders, including healthcare providers, employees, patients, and community partners, in the implementation process, encourages idea generation, and provides opportunities for feedback and collaboration.