

Media release

Covid-19 Brings the Future of Healthcare Closer

Allianz Partners launches report exploring the unprecedented acceleration of healthcare trends beyond the timelines predicted in 'The World in 2040' series just three years ago

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The Covid-19 pandemic has dramatically accelerated the projected timeline for many developments in healthcare and medical science. This has resulted in the delivery of new treatments and medicines years earlier than previously predicted. Allianz Partners has today launched 'COVID-19: How it accelerated the Future of Healthcare', a follow-up report from [The World in 2040](#) series. The new report, commissioned from futurist Ray Hammond, explores the unprecedented acceleration of healthcare and medical trends outlined in the original publication just three years ago.

Allianz Partners is a world leader in B2B2C assistance and insurance solutions, delivering global protection and care, including health insurance and related services. The [COVID-19: How it accelerated the Future of Healthcare](#) report examines what the impact of the pandemic means on the future of healthcare, science and technology. These kinds of insights are important when it comes to ensuring that a health insurance proposition is fit for customer needs, today and in the future.

The Vast Potential of mRNA Technologies

The pandemic sparked a mammoth collective effort from the global health and science community to develop a vaccine as quickly as possible, the results of which are transforming medical science. The world now sits on the verge of several potentially significant breakthroughs, mostly thanks to the ongoing research into high-tech, gene-based vaccines, which could now benefit patients with cancer, heart disease and infectious diseases.

The most significant advancement in medical science since the outbreak of the pandemic has been the rapid application, development and deployment of genetic mRNA technologies. By December 2021 more than eight billion vaccine doses had been administered around the world and more than 4.4 billion people had received one or more doses of a vaccine— about 56% of the world's population¹.

The technologies developed to produce the Covid-19 mRNA vaccines are now being used to develop further treatments. Researchers at the Yale School of Medicine are currently tackling a vaccine for malaria, while heart tissue damaged during heart attacks is now being successfully regenerated in animal trials by researchers at King's College London. Moderna

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has begun a trial for a HIV vaccine. Clinical trials of new drugs and treatments have also been re-designed and speeded up without incurring additional health risks for test participants.

Covid-19 has had a terrible cost to human lives across the globe. However, the medical innovations resulting from the pandemic may save the lives of many in the years to come.

Remote Healthcare Delivery

The original [‘Future Health, Care and Wellbeing’](#) report by Ray Hammond predicted that healthcare would be delivered remotely by 2040, using digital technology. Telehealth was an emerging trend in 2019 and consumers who needed instant medical advice were consulting doctors virtually using an app on their smartphones. The original report predicted that even if 20 percent of patients used new technologies to take more responsibility for their wellbeing over the next ten years, the burden on doctors’ offices and hospitals would be substantially reduced.

Covid-19 accelerated this practice dramatically, as the use of telemedicine, virtual wards and health technology has become commonplace across the world, to treat patients remotely and reduce the risk of spreading the virus. The implementation of new technologies and digital health greatly reduced the burden on hospitals and doctors during the pandemic, and these trends are here to stay.

For example, non-critical patients treated at home in a virtual ward are fitted with an array of on-body sensors including finger-tip oximeters which measure the metric of oxygen levels circulating in their blood. Other sensors detect and record pulse rates, body temperature, sleep patterns, blood glucose levels, respiration levels and the heart’s electrical activity. Patients with respiratory problems can use a wireless stethoscope which will allow doctors to listen to lung performance remotely. For babies, there are even smart socks which keep track of vital signs.

Commenting on the report, Paula Covey, Chief Marketing Officer Health, Allianz Partners said: *“We’re delighted to launch ‘COVID-19: How it accelerated the Future of Healthcare’, a follow up to our ‘World In 2040’ Series. This report highlights the acceleration of innovation in healthcare, science and technology at a rate far beyond what was expected just three years ago. Without doubt, the single biggest driving factor behind this drastic acceleration has been the Covid-19 pandemic. The enormous collective effort from the global medical science community, who came together to develop vaccines and treatments as quickly as possible, was unprecedented. Not only that, but the discoveries they’ve made – particularly in relation to mRNA technologies – can be applied to lots of other disease areas. This is a very welcome silver lining following a challenging few years for people around the world. As ever, Allianz Partners is harnessing the findings of this report to inform our long term planning, to ensure our offerings are relevant, customer-centric and future-focused.”*

Health Tech Adoption Accelerated

The original report predicted that soon, informed patients would be monitoring their blood pressure, blood glucose levels, potassium levels and other key health indicators with fashionable wearable devices, without the need for cumbersome equipment or invasive blood testing. Covid-19 has accelerated this practice considerably, and now technological capabilities in healthcare are extensive.

Today, health technology goes well beyond the traditional smart watch, with devices offering consumers and medics virtual snapshots of a patient’s vital signs. As the virtual ward develops

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and more patients are treated at home, other sensors and monitors are now providing additional information about the health and wellbeing of the patients to medics. These wireless sensors include mats which can detect changes in a patient's gait, cameras for patient observation, motion sensors, electric plug and switch sensors, door sensors, humidity sensors and ambient temperature sensors.

In the near future, monitoring patients in the virtual wards introduced over the past two years will become less time-consuming as artificial intelligence systems (AI) assume the role of monitoring the patients 24 hours a day.

Speaking about the report Ray Hammond said: *"As a result of Covid-19, the future has suddenly become a lot closer, particularly in terms of medical science and healthcare innovations. A lot of my predictions from 2019 have already come through, so this report, commissioned by Allianz Partners, is extremely timely. The cost of the pandemic on lives has been extremely detrimental, and we will be mourning lives lost for decades to come. There is, however, a very positive take away from this bleak time in our history - the transformations in science and healthcare. The research into heart attacks, killer diseases and other conditions will hopefully save many lives in the years to come."*

The Allianz Partners **COVID-19: How it accelerated the Future of Healthcare** report is available to read in full online [here](#).

About Allianz Partners

Allianz Partners is a world leader in B2B2C insurance and assistance, offering global solutions that span international health and life, travel insurance, mobility and assistance. Customer driven, our innovative experts are redefining insurance services by delivering future-ready, high-tech high-touch products and solutions that go beyond traditional insurance. Our products are embedded seamlessly into our partners' businesses or sold directly to customers, and are available through four commercial brands: Allianz Assistance, Allianz Automotive, Allianz Travel and Allianz Care. Present in over 75 countries, our 19,800 employees speak 70 languages, handle over 64 million cases each year, and are motivated to go the extra mile to offer peace of mind to our customers around the world.

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ⁱ <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-03686-x>