

Three healthcare technologies which could revolutionise the industry in the next decade

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Boy, was 2019 a year for healthcare. Between the ongoing problematic state of healthcare in the US, the advent of ['connected care'](#), and with big data having disrupted the entire industry, it seemed 'healthcare' was the subject of media headlines more often than not. So what will the new decade bring in terms of healthcare, I wonder? And which exciting new technologies will revolutionise the industry over the coming years? On a larger scale, AI, 5G and drones are taking the industry by storm. On a more local scale, smaller but equally important innovations like [appointment reminder software](#) are making healthcare more efficient for customers and medical professionals. These are my predictions over the next decade:



Artificial intelligence will continue to disrupt almost every aspect of healthcare

From developing the next generation of radiology tools and equipment, to expanding access to healthcare in underserved or remote regions, creating better analytics for pathology images, turning smartphones into powerful health tools and [reducing administrative burdens on healthcare professionals](#) by improving the process of capturing - and sharing - patient data, [artificial intelligence](#) is set to completely upend everything we have become familiar with in the healthcare industry.

5G will allow doctors to perform life-saving operations from afar

This is not a joke. Already, surgeons are performing operations from remote locations, with the [world's first remote surgery](#) having already taken place in January last year the southeastern province of Fujian, when a doctor used [robotic arms to treat a patient](#) in a remote town over 30 miles away. Using a 5G connection, the doctor treated an animal in a kind of 'test run' to see what could be achieved with a human. Even just this week, we have seen [telehealth devices like the 'robot' help doctors perform basic diagnostic tests on coronavirus patients](#) in the States. In order to minimise staff exposure to the patient, the robot is used instead to talk to the patient and view them.

With this type of technology still in the initial stages of experimentation, its application will likely not be widely embraced until the ethics and legalities of the procedures are worked through - in a critique similar to that given to autonomous driving. But what is known is that 5G has opened up new and exciting possibilities for these types of procedures, and we will see a lot more on this front in the coming few years.

Drone-delivered medical supplies

This is another type of technology that was experimented with last year, with positive results. Already in the US, remotely controlled drones are delivering medical samples and supplies, including blood and tissue, between two hospitals within a safe distance of one another. The long-term aim, however, is to be able to deliver critical medical supplies to remote, underserved parts of the world, during war, famine, drought and other times of crisis, as well as during times of stability. To an extent, this is already happening: drones operated by the [Silicon Valley-based startup Zipline](#) are already delivering medical supplies, including blood, rabies vaccines and antivenom, to rural health clinics in Rwanda and Ghana.

Perhaps only five or 10 years ago, we were getting excited about the prospects that mobile and computer technology could offer us - mobile bookings apps, and digital doctors. Very quickly, things have become much more advanced and scarily futuristic, but for all the right reasons.

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