

Health systems study plans to future-proof their organizations post-pandemic

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For U.S. health systems emerging from the pandemic, the promise of patient-centered care is within reach, according to the 2022 Health Systems' Climate Study. The study finds that health systems are shifting

from the system-centered mindset—which left many unprepared to meet patient needs during the pandemic—to a patient-focused approach that will enable them to improve care quality and the patient experience while lowering costs. Although health systems are up for patient-centered care, a lot of miles to go before it is implemented.

Published by the University of Colorado Denver's Health Administration Research Consortium (HARC), the second annual Health Systems' Climate Study is a snapshot of healthcare leaders' goals and plans for 2022. Its findings are the outcome of a survey of 133 U.S. [health](#) system CEOs representing \$263 billion in revenue and 1.2 million employees. The study aims to equip health system leaders and policymakers with the insights necessary to make smarter [strategic decisions](#).

To shift to a more patient-centered model of care, health system CEOs are employing three main strategies, the study finds:

1. Empowering patients through digital health. CEOs favor a multi-pronged effort that includes technologies needed to thwart increasingly frequent cyber-attacks as well as telemedicine as a means of getting closer to customers

2. Integrating to provide value-based care around health rather than illness. While COVID services must remain a focus for CEOs, the future of healthcare points to whole-person health. Alliances allow [health systems](#) to support value-based care while maintaining control over their ecosystem.

3. Developing a diverse and upskilled workforce to better serve diverse patient needs. Empowering patients with diverse needs to manage their own health improves the care experience and outcomes for patients and systems alike.

The study was authored by Jiban Khuntia, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Information Systems and Director of the HARC; Dr. Xue Ning, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Management of Information Systems at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside and HARC research fellow; and Rulon Stacey, Ph.D., Director of Programs in Health Administration at CU Denver, and chair of the CEO Circle of the International Hospital Federation.

"Shifting to a patient-centered mindset can provide enormous benefits, not only for health systems but also for patients and payors," says Dr. Jiban Khuntia. "Health system CEOs have the right priorities for creating this 'win-win-win' scenario, but what remains to be seen is whether they're taking the actions necessary to realize the potential of patient-centered care."

According to the study, health system CEOs are working to improve care quality by prioritizing:

- Driving decisions with data—88% of CEOs
- Championing the use of digital technologies—87%
- Viewing the [digital health](#) model as a top disruptor—80%

CEOs are also attempting to level-up patients' experience by prioritizing the following:

- Broadening the skills of their existing workforce—90% of CEOs
- Hiring employees with a broader set of skills—87%
- Promoting diversity and inclusion among their staff—79%
- Pursuing partnerships and alliances to address unmet needs—77%

The Health Systems' Climate Study breaks from the tradition of academic research, with CU Denver's HARC deciding to publish the

results immediately—rather than spend years conducting a formal academic analysis and review.

"Our goal is to meaningfully benefit health systems, and in turn, patients," said Dr. Rulon Stacey. "We decided to publish the data now, when it is of greater use to academics, practitioners, policymakers and those closely following our healthcare industry."

"We're grateful to the executives who were kind enough to offer their insights, perspectives, and guidance as our team conducted and reported this research. They and the 133 participating CEOs have set an example for health leaders and inspire hope for future research efforts," added Scott Dawson, Ph.D., Dean of the CU Denver Business School.

HARC, part of the Department of Health Administration at the CU Denver Business School, focuses on thought leadership in health administration and business research, relevant to health systems, health and diversity, digital and intelligent health, and health leadership.

More information: [business.ucdenver.edu/centers/ ... arch-consortium-harc](https://business.ucdenver.edu/centers/...arch-consortium-harc)

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