

Technology and public-private partnerships on pharma's agenda

By [David Gibbons](#).

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The same advances in technology and innovation that are driving a shift in the way we work, socialise and live are also driving a shift in the way we take care of our health. These advances are completely transforming the way the pharmaceutical industry operates - both here in South Africa and globally - with digitalised healthcare simplifying the delivery of healthcare services and allowing for easier and more secure management of patient data.



David Gibbons, general manager, Roche Products

As we look ahead to what 2020 likely holds for this space, we expect digitalisation of the industry to continue and to drive the growth of the market over the next year.

Technology

Artificial intelligence (AI) is perhaps one of the most exciting technologies to have emerged over the course of the last decade and increasing connectivity is today driving an increasing demand for this kind of advanced technology.

The primary aim of health-related AI applications is to analyse relationships between prevention or treatment techniques and patient outcomes. AI programs have been developed and applied to practices such as diagnosis processes, treatment protocol development, drug development, personalised medicine, as well as patient monitoring and care.

Public private partnerships

We expect that public private partnerships will feature strongly on the 2020 agenda.

In order to prosper as a country, we have to overcome the burden of disease, especially in areas such as TB and HIV, and this is best tackled as a collective of people and organisations who are concerned about the state of healthcare in this country.

Furthermore, studies have shown that the number of deaths from non-communicable diseases (NCDs) - such as cancer and diabetes - has been rising globally and that NCDs are currently among the leading causes of death in many countries, including South Africa. Overcoming the challenges of NCDs, too, requires public private partnerships.

Public private partnerships are necessary to increase the number of qualified medical doctors as well as other healthcare professionals in the country and thereby improving the overall healthcare offered in South Africa.

Championing collaborative solutions

Ground-breaking advances in medicine are only meaningful when they reach patients. As industry players, we have a responsibility to work with other key parties to ensure that all patients have access to the care and treatment they need. The challenge of ensuring access to medicines is multidimensional and there is a need to foster widespread commitment to working with government, patient organisations and healthcare partners, to ensure broad access for patients, and to find collaborative solutions to healthcare challenges such as infrastructure gaps, policy and regulatory barriers, late diagnosis and funding issues.

Additional investments in science, technology and innovation are key to improving universal healthcare, spurring economic growth and reducing poverty - in South Africa and across the continent.

For real progress to happen, we need a strong intellectual property system that encourages local research and development to produce affordable, effective innovations which improve access and the quality of healthcare for rich and poor alike.

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