



Overcoming Obstacles to Connected Care

Connected care platforms can empower clinicians to make better informed clinical decisions – and improve both patient outcomes and the patient experience in the process

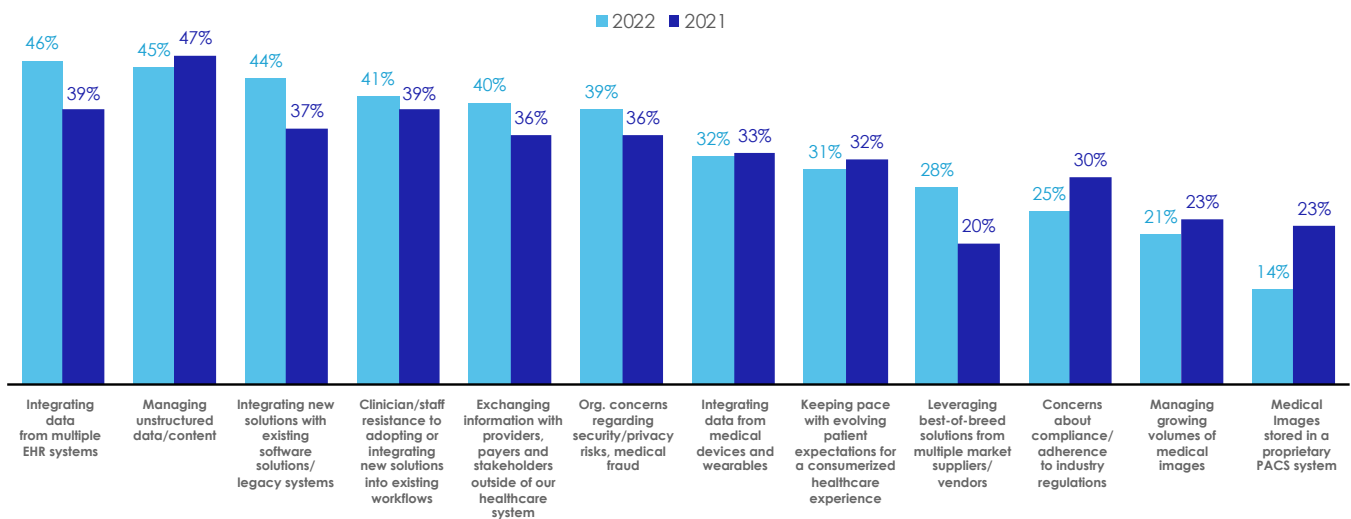
Interoperability remains top of mind for healthcare organizations across the country. After asking healthcare stakeholders what healthcare should look like by 2030, the U.S. Office of the National Coordinator (ONC) for Health Information Technology (IT) saw great consensus across the responses. Those themes included the desire to seamlessly integrate patient data from both inside and outside the healthcare system, to make all referral and transition of care data available in an electronic format and to electronically combine clinical and administrative data to support business applications.¹

Yet, while there is significant overlap about where healthcare as an industry would like to be when it comes to interoperability within the next 8 years, findings from the 2022 State of Connected Care Survey, conducted by HIMSS Market Insights, demonstrate that many organizations still face significant obstacles when trying to integrate data from multiple IT systems. Islands of data prevail. In fact, nearly half (45 percent) stated that managing unstructured data and content was getting in the way of delivering a more connected care experience to patients (Figure 1).

For some, that data point is not surprising. Colleen Sirhal, Chief Clinical Officer at Hyland Healthcare, said “We’ve been talking about the ability to maintain a patient-centric record for more than 25 years. While health systems have made huge strides in the journey from paper to digital records, they still struggle with bringing unstructured data together – whether it’s a patient note, medical image or information in a standalone system – within EMR workflow. But doing so is important to create a complete patient record that supports clinicians in making the best decisions for improved patient outcomes.”

Figure 1. The top 4 obstacles shifted from 2021 to 2022, with integrating data from multiple EHR systems now being the #1 obstacle.

What are your organization's most significant obstacles to improving interoperability and delivering a more connected care experience?



Base: Total Respondents, 2022: n=117, 2021: n=115

Bringing data together to improve outcomes

When naming their top priorities for 2022, more than half of the respondents (56 percent) in the HIMSS Market Insights survey stated that improving patient outcomes topped the list, closely followed by the need to optimize clinical workflows and performance (54 percent) (Figure 2). David Kaelber, MD, PhD, MPH, Chief Medical Informatics Officer at MetroHealth, a health system in Ohio, said these aims simply are not possible if clinicians can't get access to the information they need at the point of care.

“The more complete the information a physician or the healthcare system has, the more likely we can make the kind of decisions that will support higher quality, efficient and cost-effective care,” he said. “We know that when there is healthy information exchange, and the clinician can see labs or radiology images or notes from other providers, it makes a difference. In both inpatient and outpatient encounters, having that information can alter the kind of decisions we make about the course of care.”

Meanwhile, Sirhal believes that the many unknowns associated with the COVID-19 pandemic have heightened healthcare organizations' awareness of the need to have more comprehensive patient records to drive better patient outcomes.

“Our healthcare resources have become scarcer, and we have to be much clearer about where and when we use those resources,” she said. “In the last two and a half years, we've also become much more attuned to interventions that will drive the right outcome for a patient. In some ways, the focus is on, ‘How can we do better with less?’ And when clinicians can see all of a patient's data in a single place, it gives much more clarity on what's worked, what hasn't worked and what choices will drive an optimal result.”

But having a way to incorporate unstructured data, images and other patient health information into a single record is also vital to supporting a positive patient experience, according to Kaelber. He said MetroHealth has greatly benefitted from being able to connect its electronic health record (EHR) with internal imaging solutions, as well as external data from other healthcare systems and public health agencies.

“Imagine a patient who comes in with chest pain,” he said. “That patient was seen a week earlier, received a bunch of tests and was prescribed a heartburn medication at a different healthcare system. If I do not know about that previous visit, I might end up admitting the patient to the hospital for a full cardiac workup. But since I can see all the notes and test results, as well as the fact that the patient never filled the prescription, I can instead sit down and reinforce the healthcare plan, answering any questions the patient may have. In doing so, I can improve that patient's experience, as well as the quality, cost and efficiency of care, all at the same time.”

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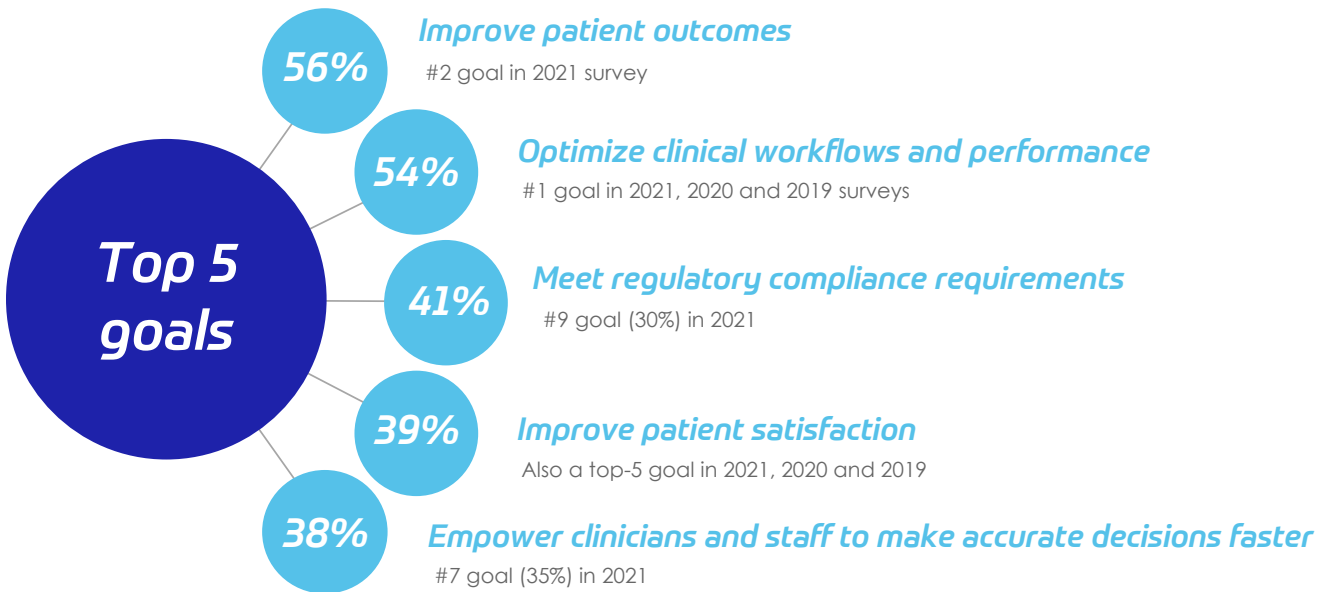


Now that we can quickly scan bar-coded documents for rapid indexing and automatically integrate them into the patient charts, every doctor and every administrator can look at that information and use what they need to do their jobs.”

CHRIS LEWIS | Director of Business Applications | UChicago Medicine

Figure 2. “Improve patient outcomes” has shifted to the #1 goal, while “Meet regulatory compliance” and “Empower clinicians and staff to make accurate decisions faster” are new to the Top 5 list.

What are the top 5 goals driving your organization’s efforts to improve interoperability and deliver a more connected care experience?



Base: Total Respondents, 2022: n=117

Different systems, overlapping needs

Chris Lewis, Director of Business Applications at UChicago Medicine, a not-for-profit academic medical health system based on the campus of the University of Chicago, added that the ability to better manage and incorporate unstructured data into business applications is also of great benefit to healthcare organizations.

“There’s kind of a gray line between clinical and business data because many of our business solutions do interface with clinical applications,” he said. “Over the past year, we’ve started digitizing a lot of paper files that were in our business management offices and providing access to them through an electronic cloud cabinet. It’s been a big win because much of that information was only accessible to a few people – and now that data can be easily accessed within our patient accounting and coding application workflow.”

The team has also improved the speed at which forms collected when the patient arrives at the hospital are attached to the patient’s record. Historically, patients would complete paper forms that were then sent to another department to be manually scanned and attached to the patient’s EHR – a process that could take two to three days. Today, those forms are captured immediately after completion and now are attached to a patient’s chart within a single day.

“This includes every single form that we have a patient fill out,” he said. “Now that we can quickly scan bar-coded documents for rapid indexing and automatically integrate them into the patient charts, every doctor and every administrator can look at that information and use what they need to do their jobs. It’s not something they have to look for – or will see later after decisions have already been made.”



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COLLEEN SIRHAL | Chief Clinical Officer and Associate Vice President, Customer Success | Hyland Healthcare

Lewis said these improvements are showing significant benefits in productivity, the ability to share information and the ability to access information remotely when needed. In fact, the Business Applications team is fielding multiple requests for further digitization projects to bring unstructured data, including clinical data, into different business applications. Sirhal said that supporting this kind of interoperability on the business side is also part of maintaining a strong connected care platform.

“Connected care is not only about getting the right data into the EMR,” said Sirhal. “It also becomes about sharing information that might traditionally sit in the enterprise resource planning (ERP) or the customer relationship management (CRM) systems. But, increasingly, we see that, when data is shared across all these different systems, healthcare organizations are in a much better position to not just manage patient care but to also manage costs and resources.”

Preparing for Interoperability 2030

When looking at the ONC wish list for interoperable capabilities in 2030, it’s clear that many organizations are looking for ways to better manage unstructured enterprise content, images and video for access within an EHR workflow. Three in four respondents in the 2022 State of Connected Care

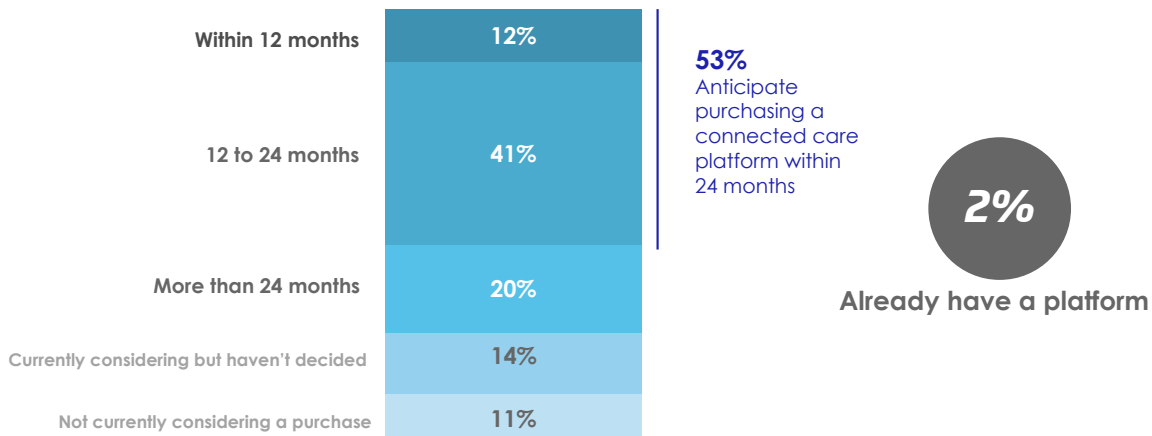
Survey noted that they have made a decision to purchase a connected care platform to help in this endeavor – with 53 percent of respondents saying they anticipate purchasing one within the next two years (Figure 3). In addition, one-third of respondents claim they are considering investments in low-code solutions (Figure 4).

“Having platforms where there are interoperability standards that make it easy for data to flow across these systems is crucial to success,” Sirhal pointed out. “There’s really two benefits to going with a low-code solution. First, it makes it easy and repeatable for people to build what they need in a configurable way without having to write lines and lines of code to do it. But it also means that it is easier to export data from your database to share with other applications when you need to.”

Kaelber said that with the right platform in place, healthcare organizations can start thinking more broadly about connecting systems, especially as different organizations may be trying to figure out how to best manage virtual care and remote monitoring or how to better integrate social determinants of health (SDoH) data into care plans. But no matter what the goal may be, in order to be successful, he said healthcare organizations should remember that interoperability is “a marathon, not a sprint.” Partnering with a trusted vendor,

Figure 3. 3 in 4 respondents have made a decision to purchase a connected care platform.

When do you anticipate purchasing a connected care platform to deliver unstructured enterprise content, images and video for access within EMR workflow?



Base: Total Respondents, 2022: n=117

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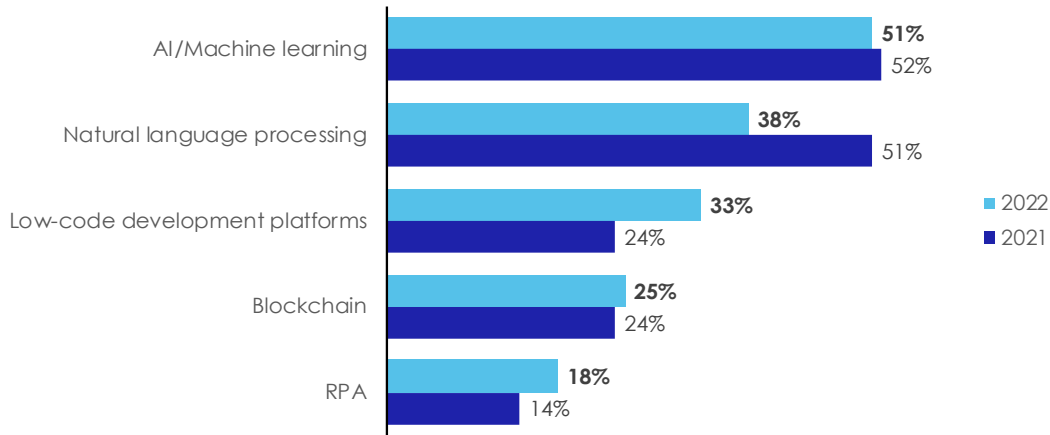


You have to look at all the different areas where you would like to see information exchanged and then slowly chip away at what makes the most sense.”

DAVID KAELEBER, MD, PHD, MPH | Chief Medical Informatics Officer | MetroHealth

Figure 4. NLP consideration has significantly reduced YOY, while low-code development platforms has grown by 9%.

What technologies that automate manual processes and reduce costs are you currently considering?



Base: Total Respondents, 2022: n=117, 2021: n=115
 ↑/↓ Indicates a significant difference from the prior wave at the 95% confidence level

he added, can help organizations better determine how, where and when to connect different systems to better meet both clinical and business needs.

“You have to look at all the different areas where you would like to see information exchanged and then slowly chip away at what makes the most sense,” he said. “If your driving strategy is to become more patient-centric, whether you are trying to drive virtual care or looking to better provide care to

underserved populations, it helps to work with vendors who can understand your problem, see it through the lens of all your different systems and then help you come up with a solution that can get you to where you want to be.”

Learn more about delivering fully connected care at [Hyland Healthcare](https://www.hylandhealthcare.com).

References

- Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology. November 2021. *Health Interoperability Outcomes for 2030*. <https://www.healthit.gov/topic/interoperability/health-interoperability-outcomes-2030>.
- HIMSS Market Insights and Hyland Healthcare. January 2022. *2022 State of Connected Care Survey*.



About Hyland Healthcare

Hyland Healthcare provides connected healthcare solutions that harness unstructured content at all corners of the enterprise and link it to core clinical and business applications such as electronic health records (EHR) and enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems. Hyland Healthcare offers a full suite of content services and enterprise imaging tools, bringing documents, medical images and other clinically rich data to the healthcare stakeholders that need it most. This comprehensive view of patient information accelerates business processes, streamlines clinical workflows and improves clinical decision making. [hylandhealthcare.com](https://www.hylandhealthcare.com)