



# Healthcare Workforce – 2023 Health IT Predictions

By John Lynn

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As we head into 2023, we wanted to kick off the new year with a series of [2023 Health IT predictions](#). We asked the Healthcare IT Today community to submit their predictions and we received a wide ranging set of responses that we grouped into a number of themes. Check out our communities predictions below and be sure to add your own thoughts and/or places you disagree with these predictions in the comments and on social media.

Check out our community's healthcare workforce predictions.

## **Kelly Conklin, Chief Clinical Officer at [PerfectServe](#)**

Let's be real—nurses are, to put it lightly, still being stretched very thin. We're no longer in the throes of the pandemic, but staffing issues persist in a major way, and the people putting on scrubs every day are struggling to tread water. I've been talking with hospitals all over the country this year, and in recent conversations I've heard more and more about virtual nursing. This kind of technology-enabled workflow can take a tremendous burden off of some of our most important care team members.

Think about it—we've already got technology that can efficiently deliver every kind of communication, whether it's going from patient to nurse or from nurse to patient. At the push of a button, a virtual nurse can walk through the admission checklist or answer other general questions for the patient, which then frees bedside nurses up to answer calls and tend to physical patient needs faster. That's a huge win for nurses and patients alike, and I think more organizations will be investigating and deploying solutions like this in the coming year.

## **Emily Goetz, Vice President of Commercial at [Bright.md](#)**

Staffing issues, record losses, and burnout continued to plague the healthcare industry in 2022. Emergency departments and urgent cares are over capacity nationwide, and patients often wait weeks to see their primary care physician. Labor shortages and financial pressures are even shuttering some hospitals, leading to gaps in access for entire communities and piling on the pressure for remaining systems.

In order to alleviate the ongoing effects of these challenges for the long-term, providers and health systems need to truly transform the way they deliver care. In 2023, we're going to see much greater investment in technology that can increase provider capacity and streamline workflows while improving patient access—things like asynchronous telehealth, digital front door technology, and remote patient monitoring.

## **Chris Baird, Chief Marketing Officer at [Weave](#)**

Healthcare staffing shortages will continue to negatively impact patient experience in 2023. With

healthcare professionals working longer hours and dealing with increased workloads, patient experience has fallen to the wayside. Patients are the lifeblood of the healthcare industry — especially small healthcare clinics — yet a recent survey conducted by Weave found that 2 out of 3 small healthcare businesses claim they are short-staffed, with little evidence that these shortages will end anytime soon.

If small healthcare organizations want to survive the coming year, they need to focus on investing in digital solutions that cut down on administrative tasks such as scheduling, sending appointment reminders, and intake forms, in order to allow staff more time to work one-on-one with patients and keep them satisfied. Like any organization, customer happiness and reputation can be the difference in whether or not a company remains in business. As businesses gear up for the coming recession, the patient experience must be the top priority for healthcare leaders.

**Wendy Deibert, SVP of Clinical Solutions at [Caregility](#)**

*Virtual Nursing will Move from Concept to Practical Application:* We'll see virtual nursing move from concept to practical application as health systems seek to put a dent in workforce shortages in 2023. Hybrid nursing programs introduce virtual support resources and remote work flexibility to nursing teams, which can have a tremendous positive impact on nurse training, clinician experience, and care delivery.

**Chuck Whinney, VP of Healthcare Strategy at [Infor](#)**

With a looming recession, supply chain, and staffing issues, financial viability remains a top concern for healthcare leaders, with many questioning whether the healthcare industry can still be considered to be recession-proof. Despite this, an organization's flexibility and compliance with new regulations will help ensure success.

As we look at financial viability in healthcare systems, we can expect to see CFOs spending less on travel nurses, reducing office space, and cutting costs on supplies and cleaning. On the other hand, we can expect to see CFOs spending almost 65% more ERPs, essential to streamlined workflows.

Despite industry moves like Oracle's acquisition of Cerner, don't expect to see a universal or national electronic healthcare system emerging in the coming year. Oracle's proposed monolithic provider proposition won't prove flexible enough to respond to new trends and the need to combine different workflow systems and APIs. Instead, we anticipate a more mix and match, custom approach to EHRs.

**Susan Taylor, VP, HCLS Core Administration at [Pegasystems](#)**

Operating departments in HC organizations will risk near-term KPIs to invest in intelligent automation that reduces the burden of administrative work and frustration on their staff Googling "staffing crisis in healthcare" just now returned 12 million posts and articles. The crisis is touching every area of healthcare and requiring ultra-marathon level heroics from HC workers.

Current staffing levels are barriers to accessing care at a time when the industry is focusing important thought leadership on health equity. Without addressing the work of healthcare, these efforts are bound to sub-perform. The problem is getting worse as the need for healthcare workers grows faster than the overall labor market.

In 2023, IT organizations and operating departments (clinical and non-clinical) will form and prioritize new partnerships that will allow them to use AI in operations to automate and eliminate work while being more effective in prioritizing administrative work to optimize the impact on patients, employees,

and financial performance of organizations. Transparent, useful, ethical AI will create better health outcomes for everyone.

**Grace Nam, Strategic Solutions Manager at [Laserfiche](#)**

Embracing digital workflows and modernization will be transformational for healthcare systems in 2023. Technology will improve and reform workforce structures to eliminate staff burden and burnout and create new opportunities for upskilling. Career growth opportunities and ease of use for employees will be critical to providing quality support to patients.

Additionally, secure electronic documentation tools will be used to store key data, such as around a patient's visits and medical history, and create clear treatment plans and monitor progress. This will, for example, enable the interflow and exchange of patients' clinical lab results between clinical workforce and medical staff. Overcoming staffing shortages will be top of mind for health care operators in 2023.

More than ever healthcare professionals want to focus on things that matter, such as patient care and outcomes, versus tedious and time-consuming tasks such as paperwork. As such, digitalization will be used to streamline and centralize documents and information, improving staff and patient experiences; better integrate departments to drive collaboration; and eliminate data silos and capture metadata/auto-populate metadata.

Automation will be used to improve operational efficiency and staff experience across the board — organizations who do not embrace automation and digitalization will struggle with employee retention. Healthcare Information Exchanges (HIEs) will continue to evolve in 2023. Through interoperability via low-code integrations, improved accuracy on patient information and documentation will be available for more patients and people with access rights.

**Wayne Johnson, Vice President of Special Operations at [Sunwave Health](#)**

Staffing shortages will cause severe care disruption. According to a recent industry survey by Sunwave Health, 91% of behavioral health providers said they experience moderate to severe staffing shortages. Almost 75% say that this impacts patient care moderately to severely.

The 2023 final Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (PFS) eased supervisory requirements for care delivered by a licensed professional counselor or licensed marriage and family therapist. However, increasing patient demands, competitive talent markets, and a shortage of practitioners will continue to plague mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) providers into 2023.

While not a silver bullet for staffing challenges, investment in the right tools and technologies represent one of the fastest paths to protecting margins, driving higher reimbursement rates, and effectively and quickly identifying areas of loss and opportunity across a provider's ecosystem.

**Florian Otto, CEO and Co-Founder at [Cedar](#)**

*Providers Will Fight Revenue Challenges With Admin Efficiencies:* The biggest obstacle providers will continue to face is navigating labor issues (sustained shortages and increasingly high costs). Providers will need to re-evaluate their administrative solutions for opportunities to automate and create efficiency.

Healthcare consumers experience a lot of friction along their healthcare journeys, and technology helps you navigate this journey very effectively on your own; empowering consumers to better engage with

their digital health journeys, while also reducing operational costs and administrative labor inefficiencies.

**Jason Gorevic, CEO at [Teladoc Health](#)**

Technology will play a unique and pivotal role in narrowing the significant nursing shortages in hospitals and health systems. April 2022, a nursing workforce analysis in Health Affairs, found that total supply of RNs decreased by more than 100,000 from 2020 to 2021 – the largest drop than ever observed over the past four decades and job satisfaction is currently at its worst.

Our client, Saint Luke's Health System in Kansas City, Missouri, is working to address the nursing shortage by having virtual nurses support bedside nurses. The virtual nurses can assist with non-hands-on care, education, documentation, admission, discharge, answering questions, and reviewing care plans.

The unit has enhanced Saint Luke's bedside care response rates, increased patient and nurse satisfaction, reduced the burden on bedside nurses, and positively impacted quality and safety for a better work environment. Patients are discharged within two hours of the discharge order, some 20% faster than in other units, and they're also out of the hospital before noon at a 44% faster rate. This has, in turn, reduced the wait time for patients in the ED and reduces the time to treatment. What's more, these benefits have boosted nurse morale, improving workforce engagement, reducing fatigue, even improving Saint Luke's recruitment capabilities.

**John Guiliana, Medical Director of Podiatry at [ModMed](#)**

With staffing shortages still overwhelming the industry, practices need to get even smarter about how they leverage technology to reduce staff workloads in 2023. We can expect to see a larger shift toward implementing all-in-one, specialty-specific software solutions that can help streamline workflows, allowing clinicians and staff to spend less time on repetitive admin tasks and enabling them to be more present for patients.

**Jessica Sweeney-Platt, VP of research/editorial strategy at [athenahealth](#)**

In 2022, physicians reported unsustainable workloads, exacerbated by a widespread staffing crisis and administrative burdens on staff that are driving many to burnout. These issues are expected to continue into 2023. There is reason to believe, however, that there are specific, tangible actions that organizations can take in order to mitigate some of the worst effects.

In 2023, more organizations will implement team-based care models. Forty percent of respondents from athenahealth's 2021 Physician Sentiment Survey who reported working in a team-based environment said their organization is set up to minimize time on administrative tasks and instead focus on patient care, compared to 26% who work in more traditional environments.

Team-based care not only can make an enormous impact on provider job satisfaction through task delegation and increased communication, it can also contribute to building a sense of community and belonging, which are crucial to increasing engagement and preventing burnout among providers. Seventy-three percent of physicians who reported working in a team-based environment said that they collaborate consistently on difficult cases, compared to 57% of physicians in other types of practice environments. A team-based care model enables better collaboration, as well as deeper relationships with colleagues and patients alike.

**Iman Abuzeid, CEO & Co-Founder at [Incredible Health](#)**

In 2023, I predict the industry will see:

1. A continuing wage inflation for permanent nurse workers. According to a recent report by McKinsey, analysts predict a \$370 billion increase in U.S. health expenses by 2027, thanks to rising labor and supply costs. Median hourly wage rates for contract nurses increased to \$103 in 2021 and \$132 in the beginning of 2022, according to a report from Kaufman Hall. In 2023, employers, patients or taxpayers could be on the hook for hundreds of billions of dollars in additional health spending due to inflation-driven costs.
2. High vacancy rates as the nurse labor shortage continues. The main driver of hospital expense increase is labor costs as staff turnover increased by 27.1% in 2021. Supply in healthcare was not meeting demand before the pandemic. Due to high levels of burnout, nurses are leaving the industry in droves. In March, Incredible Health's Third Annual State of Nursing Report found that more than 1/3 of nurses surveyed said they're likely to quit their jobs by the end of 2022. As patient demand increases with our aging population, the U.S. nurse workforce is underwater, with those considering leaving the profession citing burnout and excessive stress as key factors. This will only worsen in 2023 unless hospitals implement retention tools to improve burnout.
3. An increasing focus on hiring operational improvements and speed. Hospitals need to invest in technology that also allows them to operate on low margins. The processes, tools, and technology for hiring permanent nurses have not changed in 20 years. In 2023, hospital leaders must focus their efforts on hiring and upgrading their systems in order to attract top-tier talent.
4. An increasing focus on nurse career advancement programming and flexible schedules. At Incredible Health, we found that career advancement is the top priority for nurses when looking for a new role. Location has become less of a reason for nurses to reject a job interview, dropping 28% from the previous year. This shows that nurses are more open to relocating to find roles that better fit their needs and preferences. By prioritizing both of these priorities, health systems can retain and attract more nurses in 2023.
5. Growing partnerships between nursing leaders and finance leaders for improved staffing models and retention models. Due to the nursing shortage and high inflation wages, CNOs and CFOs need to come together to rethink the solutions to staffing and retention. In 2023, we expect to see an increase in collaboration across these teams as they invest in new tools that will improve their workforce. By working together, they can create a dynamic hiring process that allows them to operate on low margins.

**Chris Sullivan, Global Healthcare Practice Lead at [Zebra Technologies](#)**

Healthcare leaders will look to automate processes to help manage rising costs and labor shortages. Costs are 10% of global GNP spend and growing twice the rate of inflation. At the same time, the nursing shortage continues to grow, and more healthcare providers are dropping out of the workforce. More than one-third of nurses reported it's very likely that they will leave their roles by the end of 2022 (Incredible Health).

Additionally, with more than 500,000 seasoned RNs anticipated to retire by 2022, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects the need for 1.1 million new RNs to avoid a nursing shortage. To manage the

challenge of having higher costs and less available labor, the healthcare industry will need to improve operational efficiency, capacity and labor management, along with resource utilization and service quality.

Hospital leaders will look to automate as many workflows as possible to better manage supply chain, patient demand/turnover, and the workforce. Automating the right processes will allow for more efficient throughput management, as well as scheduling optimization, to help better manage costs.

In the new year, expect more interest in business model transformation, which includes dual systems of care, site of care shifts, and virtual care product lines. The industry will look to deploy technology to provide faster admission rates, room-turn and patient discharge turns improving capacity management outcomes. Also, expect more focus on using technology to better manage labor costs, reducing overtime pay and employment agency spend.

To combat labor shortages, healthcare administrators will need to work fast to augment the workforce with technology tools that facilitate widespread collaboration, improve planning and execution, and balance schedules according to actual vs. assumed bandwidth. Clinical mobility solutions will start to scale beyond the bedside to urgent/emergency departments where there is a desperate need for instant information, including patient identities and medical histories as well as diagnostic and treatment guidance from physically distanced doctors. Workers need to be able to keep tabs on staff, patients, equipment, supplies, specimens, drugs and more, increasing patient access levels and sustainable profitability for operational efficiency.

**Steve Lefar, Chief Strategy Officer at [Strata Decision Technology](#)**

Our data collaborative, StrataSphere, which captures data from more than 190 health systems, shows health systems' labor costs rose more than 20% and supply costs rose by 7%. In 2023, margin management will become the mantra. Health systems are trying to find new revenues and cut costs, but will need to get very micro-targeted on margin per encounter and case.

To mitigate the threat of these challenges, health systems need to take advantage of financial planning technology, a worthwhile investment that can help them save both time and money down the line. Utilizing insights from a platform, they can identify additional opportunities to invest in technology for the automation of tasks like insurance and eligibility checking. These cost efficient capabilities can improve the patient experience while also taking some burden off of the busy and often burnt out healthcare staff.

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