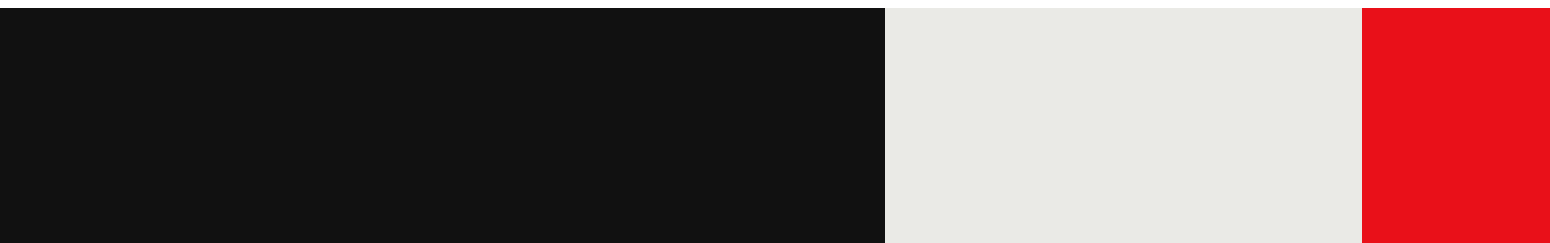



# Big Tech Countdown Day 1: Microsoft's top 5 healthcare moves in 2021

Article



Here's a look back at Microsoft's top 5 healthcare moves since the start of the year—and why they'll be significant for its growth in 2022.

**1. Microsoft secured major health system *and* pharma partnerships in February.**

- Microsoft expanded its partnership with global pharma giant **UCB** in February to accelerate drug discovery and development using Microsoft’s computational AI and cloud capabilities.
- Also in February, it scored a partnership with one of the largest health systems in the US, **Kaiser Permanente**, to improve its cloud capabilities and personalize patient care. To give an idea of the scale of Kaiser’s footprint, **its cloud environment supports 12.4 million patients**—which is larger than the population of NYC alone.
- These partnerships indicate that Microsoft is casting a wide net across the healthcare ecosystem, and it could synergize its different healthcare endeavors down the road.

**2. In March, Microsoft launched Microsoft Mesh.** This is a new mixed reality platform that uses its **HoloLens** headset to project a hologram of a person or objects that users can interact with as if they’re there in person.

As hype around the metaverse continues to build, Microsoft could leverage Mesh to get an early entrance into metaverse applications in healthcare, like telehealth visits that more closely mimic in-person visits, or digital therapies that more fully engage patients. For context, the metaverse is like a virtual simulation of the real world—like an advanced version of virtual and augmented reality.

**3. Microsoft’s biggest healthcare move in 2021 was its April \$19.7 billion acquisition of AI voice assistant company Nuance Communications.**

- For context, Nuance is a leader in the healthcare voice recognition space. Its solutions leverage conversational AI and natural language processing to accurately automate clinical documentation.
- This was a bold, yet smart move for Microsoft to augment its healthcare cloud products and address the healthcare system’s massive clinician burnout problem with better administrative AI. Clinician burnout costs the US healthcare system **around \$4.6 billion annually**, according to a 2019 Annals of Internal Medicine study.
- Not to mention, this M&A deal cements Microsoft as a leading healthcare AI provider. **Around 35% of healthcare organizations** said Microsoft’s healthcare AI offerings are “strong” to “very strong”—and it beat out **Google (27%)**, **Amazon (27%)**, and **IBM (24%)**, according to the 2020 KLAS Healthcare AI report.

**4. Microsoft’s cloud business, Microsoft Azure, was selected by healthcare data analytics disruptor Truveta in September.** That’s significant, considering Truveta’s footprint spans 17

large US health systems, giving the tech giant another major inroad into healthcare.

- Truveta’s platform sifts through the collective health systems’ deidentified patient data using AI and machine learning to help providers deliver efficient, high-quality, personalized care.
- By powering the platform’s cloud, Microsoft Azure can also potentially gain more credibility in healthcare as a tech giant—something that it’s fellow tech giants have struggled with.

**5. In October, Microsoft revealed new virtual care capabilities with better electronic health record (EHR) integration via both Epic and Cerner’s EHR systems.**

Microsoft 365 and Teams software will be used to improve the connectedness of shared devices (including both Android and iOS devices), enhance workforce communication via Microsoft 365’s Admin Center, and improve virtual visit scheduling, notifications, documentation, and charting. This shows how Microsoft is really trying to sink its teeth into the provider space via both health system partnerships and new EHR applications.