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AI is a game-changer for cardiology—it's time for practices to get on board

By Michael Walter

In cooperation with



The use of artificial intelligence technologies in healthcare has evolved at a breathtaking rate in the last few years. Hype and hypotheticals have been replaced with real, practical tools that help physicians focus less on data and more on providing high-quality care.

What is AI capable of in 2026 and beyond? And what does this mean for cardiology practices and the patients they treat every day? Those were just some of the questions explored in a recent webinar hosted by Cardiovascular Business and NextGen Healthcare.

Watch the full webinar [here](#) and read on for more details.

AI in healthcare: Where things stand today

One recent [American Medical Association](#) survey validates what we're all perceiving: AI adoption among physicians is exploding in the United States. While 38% of physicians were using AI in 2023, for example, that number jumped to 66% in 2024. In addition, 68% of physicians now say they see AI as a significant advantage when treating patients.



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Robert Murry, PhD, MD, FAAFP, Chief Medical Officer for NextGen Healthcare

“If you are not among the two-thirds of physicians who have already used AI, you may already be behind,” explains Robert Murry, PhD, MD, FAAFP, chief medical officer for NextGen Healthcare.

As Murry notes, AI is currently being used in every step of the patient’s journey, from scheduling that first very visit to overseeing post-visit tasks that ensure the patient is on the path to recovery. Revenue cycle management is another area where AI is making a difference.

“AI can certainly help generate clean claims, avoid denials by learning what payors are up to these days and analyze encounters to prove the level of visits are appropriate,” Murry says.

Proper implementation remains a critical piece of the AI puzzle. After all, even the most advanced algorithms can only do so much when they aren’t implemented correctly. Murry urges practices to pursue relationships with proven leaders instead of buying into the first option they find. Key too is that humans are still involved in these various processes.

“The point of AI is to reduce some sort of friction, to remove some sort of barrier,” Murry says. When humans stay involved and oversee the use of advanced algorithms it helps ensure AI is not just “technology for technology’s sake.”

4 guiding principles for the development and implementation of AI

As Murry notes, NextGen Healthcare has its own proven philosophy when it comes to human-centered, user-driven AI.

The company believes AI tools should:

1. **Augment physicians instead of replacing them.** AI should enhance clinical judgement, not serve as a substitute for a physician’s expertise and compassion.
2. **Reduce clicks instead of adding them.** If the workflow doesn’t get any easier, then why introduce AI at all?
3. **Be built with safety, trust and transparency in mind.** Compliance and fairness must be nonnegotiable throughout the entire development process.
4. **Consider the end user at all times.** Physicians should be guiding the creation of all AI models to ensure they are easy to use and provide real, measurable value.

The power of ambient listening

One of the biggest ongoing trends in AI is the rise of ambient listening, also known as AI-enhanced documentation. Basic dictation and scribe services have been around for quite some time, but ambient listening takes the idea of documenting patient encounters to a whole new level.

NextGen Healthcare’s Ambient Assist, for instance, allows cardiologists to fully focus on their patients. It runs in the background, processes the entire appointment and then crafts a detailed account of exactly what was said. When a cardiac patient is being seen by a physician, they don’t want to compete for attention with the electronic health record (EHR) or the distracting click-clack of typing; they want engaging conversations focused on the diagnosis and management of their own health.

The use of Ambient Assist skyrocketed from 9,000 encounters per month in 2023 to 188,000 encounters per month in 2024, Murry notes. Users are always encouraged to review the AI-crafted note after the encounter to achieve the maximum benefit.

“You are still going to edit the note,” he says. “We want you to edit the note. The AI is amazing, but it is not ‘smart’ and does not really ‘know’ what is important. You should be adding your medical reasoning to the note and taking out any sections you don’t like.”

According to the Gartner Hype cycle, Murry adds, right now is the perfect time to adopt ambient listening. This technology has finally bounced back after the “trough of disillusionment,” improved through the “slope of enlightenment” and reached the “plateau of productivity.” The time to adopt is now.

Cardiologists amazed by AI’s impact

Users are regularly blown away when they experience ambient listening technologies for the first time. “Do not assume what an AI scribe can and cannot do,” he says. “You have to try it for yourself.”

One early adopter found Ambient Assist helped physicians have their EHR open for an average of six minutes less per patient encounter. Soon enough, the practice’s physicians had their EHR open up to 10 hours less per week with Ambient Assist than they did prior to implementation. That adds up to 10 hours of time spent engaging with the patient instead of staring at the screen and making patients feel like an afterthought.

Another early adopter of this technology found that 75% of the practice’s notes were being completed during regular office hours with the help of Ambient Assist. Without Ambient Assist, that number was just 45%. A similar surge was seen in how many notes were being completed on the same day of the appointment: the rates were 76% with Ambient Assist and 63% without.

“Nobody wants to work outside of office hours if you can avoid it, so that increase is great for the provider’s morale,” Murry says. “And finishing the note on the day of the appointment means the charges can get processed that night and the claim can go out the next day. That decreases your days in accounts receivable and you’ll get the adjudication back from the payer faster—or if it needs to go to the patient, they’ll get it faster and they’ll be more likely to pay. So that translates into a real ROI for the practice.”

Transforming the entire patient encounter

As we know, AI’s impact goes well beyond patient encounters. It helps practices achieve a balanced closed-loop experience where every step of care is both smooth and efficient, making repetitive tasks and unnecessary paperwork a relic of the past. Today’s patients demand a seamless, personalized and friction-free experience. AI can help make that a reality.

From the perspective of healthcare executives, meanwhile, AI in 2026 is more necessity than luxury. Leaders expect the best from their care teams—and the only way to achieve the best care possible is investing in the best technologies.

Jenna Hagan, MS, ATC, OTC, PMC-III, vice president of product marketing for NextGen Healthcare, notes that leaders have this perspective now because AI is known to consistently save practices both time and money.

“Organizations leveraging these AI-driven technologies are getting faster referrals,” she says. “Automated workflows are closing loops two times faster and reducing leakage with a 90% or higher conversion rate.”

She also notes that smarter scheduling—being able to automatically take a new referral or reschedule an appointment—is having a significant impact in terms of employee satisfaction and retention in addition to saving healthcare organizations money.

Letting your staff show up at 8 a.m. when you open and not managing voicemails and the last-minute cancellations and the no-shows is helping fill those gaps by up to 40% and keeping revenue flowing through the door,” she says.

AI also is associated with key benefits in waitlist automation, payment collections and patient intake.

“There’s nothing that triggers me more as a patient than showing up at a practice and being handed a clipboard and 12 pieces of paper to fill out, knowing the staff will have to scan and file it and knowing the provider will not have any of that information and re-ask those questions when I get back to the exam room,” she says.

Hagan also celebrates the impact AI models can have on answering the phone and handling a majority of patient questions. Voice AI systems have been found to save practices more than 100 hours of time per month, and most patients never even know they aren’t speaking to a human.

“The humans in your call center can then be reallocated to more meaningful work—those really important patient conversations—and let the technology solve the easier use cases,” she says.

Agentic AI: The next step forward

Looking ahead, the use of AI agents capable of taking in inputs and giving out outputs—agentic AI—represents the future of AI in healthcare. NextGen Healthcare’s own AI agent can have full conversations with the physician, summarizing their schedule and providing key insights into each patient as quickly and thoughtfully as if it was a living, breathing human. It also can pull up prior imaging results, lab results and messages on demand without any delay. As NextGen Healthcare completes the finishing touches their AI agent, Murry says organizations will need to make sure their AI agents all get along.

If they are unable to communicate, he says, it causes confusion and chaos instead of that optimal friction-free patient experience.

“If our AI agents cannot talk to one another, or they aren’t integrated into a single platform, you are going to be missing out on some of the benefits that can come from the interactions of those AI agents,” Murry says.

Watch the full webinar [here](#).