News story: New code of conduct for artificial intelligence (AI) systems used by the NHS

A new code of conduct for artificial intelligence and other data-driven technologies will ensure that only the best and safest systems are used by the NHS.

The code encourages technology companies to meet a gold-standard set of principles to protect patient data to the highest standards. It has been drawn up with the help of industry, academics and patient groups.

The aim is to make it easier for suppliers to develop technologies that tackle some of the biggest issues in healthcare, such as dementia, obesity and cancer. It will also help health and care providers choose safe, effective and secure technology to improve the services they provide.

The code will:

- promote the UK as the best place in the world to invest in healthtech
- provide evidence of what good practice looks like to industry and commissioners
- reassure patients and clinicians that data-driven technology is safe, effective and maintains privacy
- allow the government to work with suppliers to guide the development of new technology so products are suitable to the NHS in the future
- make sure the NHS get a fair deal from the commercialisation of its data resources

The code will also mean the NHS is fairly rewarded for allowing companies access to its data pool to build life-saving artificial intelligence systems.

The code is made up of 10 principles that set out how the government will make it easier for companies to work with the NHS to develop new technologies and what the NHS expects in return.

It will be regularly updated in partnership with industry and stakeholders to ensure it keeps pace with the market.

AI technology is already being used across the NHS to improve the early diagnosis of heart disease and lung cancer, to reduce the number of unnecessary operations performed due to false positives, assist research by better matching patients to clinical trials, and support the planning of care for patients with complex needs. Examples include:

- Moorfields/Deepmind – 1 million anonymised eye scans were shared with Deepmind under a research agreement that began in mid-2016. Deepmind’s algorithm is designed to find early signs of age-related macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy.

- John Radcliffe Hospital – worked with their partner, Ultromics, to use AI to improve detection of heart disease and lung cancer
- Imperial College London – developed a new AI system that can predict the survival rates for patients with ovarian cancer

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

> Artificial intelligence has the potential to save lives, but also brings challenges that must be addressed.
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> We need to create an ecosystem of innovation to allow this type of technology to flourish in the NHS and support our incredible workforce to save lives, by equipping clinicians with the tools to provide personalised treatments.
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> AI must be used responsibly and our code of conduct sets a gold-standard set of rules to ensure patient data is always protected and the systems we use are some of the safest in the world.

Dr Simon Eccles, Chief Clinical Information Officer for Health and Care, said:

> Parts of the NHS have already shown the potential impact AI could have in the future of the NHS in reading scans, for example, to enable clinicians to focus on the most difficult cases.
>
> This new code sets the bar companies will need to meet to bring their products into the NHS so we can ensure patients can benefit from not just the best new technology, but also the safest and most secure.