Within3

What's Next for AI in Pharma: 2026 Predictions from Industry Leaders

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How has your relationship with artificial intelligence (AI) changed during 2025? For many of us, this was the year when generative AI went from being a curiosity or a gimmick to an indispensable application. Generative AI is the new search engine. It's become a creative collaborator, cheerleader and critic. It would hardly be a radical prediction to expect these trends to become further entrenched next year. Per Statista, the generative AI market is predicted to show an annual growth rate of 37.57% over the next five years.

As for AI in pharma, continued expansion seems certain here too. The global pharma AI market is projected to grow from $3.8 billion in 2025 to $15.2 billion by the end of 2030. But what other AI trends might we expect to see in 2026 and beyond? In this report, we've collated views from internal Within3 experts, external survey results from pharma industry leaders, and the latest industry data to compile our list of pharma AI predictions for 2026. What follows are the nine trends industry experts believe will define the coming year.

PREDICTION #1

AI will eliminate manual insights reporting

Currently, insights reporting is a labor-intensive process, with a significant manual burden on data collection and analysis. Survey data predicts that this dynamic will evolve significantly in the years ahead. AI will form an intelligent layer that sits on top of pharma teams' internal and external systems to automate repetitive manual reporting – enabling teams to focus their time on higher-value strategic tasks. It's important to note that AI will not replace human oversight but augment and expedite human analysis to deliver significant efficiency gains while keeping human hands firmly on the wheel.

This prediction is echoed by our recent industry survey results, with 47% of experts seeing 'reducing manual reporting and analytics work' as the area where AI will have the greatest impact over the year ahead. When we partnered with MAPS to ask the same question of our pharma industry peers over LinkedIn, that percentage crept up to 50%. This consensus should come as little surprise, given that data analysts currently spend 80% of their time finding, cleaning, and organizing data – leaving only 20% to actually perform analysis (Pragmatic Institute).

"AI is helping us detect contextual shifts in real time and route validated, equity-aware insights to the right owners. That means we can avoid missteps and better demonstrate the impact on beliefs, behaviors, and ultimately patient outcomes."

– PREM SUNDIVAKKAM - PFIZER, EXECUTIVE LEAD, GLOBAL MEDICAL COMMUNICATIONS AND CONGRESS I INTERNAL MEDICINE, ANTIVIRALS

PREDICTION #2

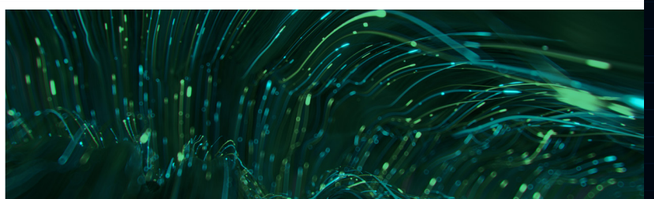
AI will transform static planning into continuous, adaptive strategies

Traditionally, launch teams have excelled at planning. They're detail-oriented and adept at accurately addressing operational considerations, such as the 'when' and the 'how' of launching a new therapy. However, they're historically less strong regarding big-picture thinking: the 'what' and the 'why' of a pharmaceutical launch. Impatient Health has even claimed that "*commercial teams don't actually do launch strategy – not as any other industry would recognize it.*"

These launch plans are often rigid, and struggle to adapt when market forces change. Survey data predicts that AI will balance this equation, enabling teams to use predictive modelling to simulate markets, anticipate patient and HCP behavior, and adapt launch strategies as required. This will represent a radical shift in the way the industry currently operates. According to our survey, only one in every 10 companies are currently using real-time data to guide launch or engagement strategy.

"If we can predict a physician's behavior, why not apply that same modeling to an entire marketplace?"

– IAN MCKINNON, MANAGING DIRECTOR, GLOBAL HEAD OF CONSULTING



"If you're only doing in-person ad boards, I think you're missing out, because you could be faster, and you can innovate faster."

– CAROLINA KUNNEN, ALCON, GLOBAL DIRECTOR, PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

PREDICTION #3

AI will make hybrid engagements the 'new normal'

The lockdowns triggered by the COVID 19 pandemic are not times many will remember fondly. However, the rise of remote, asynchronous work during this period has had a positive impact on the way many industries continue to do business. Following an initial post-lockdown pushback that saw in-person congresses and advisory boards make a brief resurgence, the industry has recognized the benefits of hybrid engagements – combining the depth of interaction offered by in-person sessions with the reach and inclusivity of digital models. According to Cecilia Petrus and Holly Lam, via the National Library of Medicine, HCPs now "*prefer to meet at least 2–4 times per year using a mix of web meetings and virtual discussion forums where they can contribute on their own time over a 2-to-3-week period.*"

A significant majority of our survey respondents (66%) view a 'balanced hybrid model' as the future of HCP engagement, and industry experts predict that this move will inevitably be powered by AI. In this 'new normal' global exchanges will become seamless – with AI-powered translation, scheduling, and real-time collaboration tools maximizing and democratizing participation and driving outcomes.

"We'll soon be able to weigh influence across channels simultaneously, and network analytics will be a huge differentiator."

– TONY PAGE, SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT, INSIGHT ANALYTICS

PREDICTION #4

AI will reveal new 'networks of authority' shrinking the influence of traditional KOLs

It's not just the way we engage experts that's set to be transformed by AI, but also the very experts we engage themselves. Just four of our survey respondents believe that traditional KOLs will continue to wield the greatest influence in shaping scientific and market considerations in 2026. Meanwhile, 35% expect patient advocates and communities to dominate these conversations moving forward. Our LinkedIn MAPS survey respondents shared the same view, with a majority (43%) seeing patient advocates and communities as increasingly influential in 2026.

AI-powered network analytics analyzes social, clinical, and scientific data to assess the multidimensional influence of the industry's top experts, and reveal the 'networks of authority' that have previously remained hidden. These disease community connections run far deeper than mere publication data. Survey data predicts that in 2026, traditional KOLs will merely represent one influential voice among many.

PREDICTION #5

AI will enable instantaneous market responses

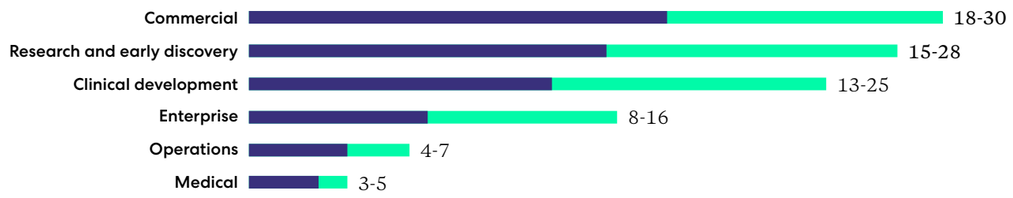
Next year, industry experts predict that AI will take huge strides in addressing pharma's siloed data problem. AI will enable integration of disparate data sources, such as field activity, social sentiment, and claims data – providing teams with a clear, real-time view of the market. The outcome of this will be near-instantaneous market response times, allowing teams to course-correct rapidly and confidently.

This dynamic will create a 'haves and have-nots' scenario at launch, with launch success determined by a company's ability to leverage AI to their advantage. Early adopters will claim the lion's share of the market in their therapeutic area, using real-time information to outmanoeuvre their competitors at every step.

In fact, McKinsey data shows how commercial applications of AI are poised to generate the greatest share of value across the pharma industry value chain:

Generative AI is expected to produce $60 billion to $110 billion in annual value across the pharmaceutical industry value chain.

Expected value annually, $ billion



"There's often 20% to 25% of market share left unrealized. Real-time information lets you capture that missing piece." *– LANCE HILL, FOUNDER AND CEO*

PREDICTION #6

AI will predict sentiment shifts before they occur

Industry experts predict that in 2026 and beyond, market intelligence will become increasingly active. Traditional social listening will become less about learning what the market is thinking and feeling, and more about anticipating patient, HCP, and competitor sentiment shifts before they occur.

AI is capable of contextualizing sentiment data across multiple sources – continually tracking signals, trends and patterns to recognize when change is in the winds. Many industries are already putting this information to use: per Medium, streaming platforms use predictive sentiment analytics to cut viewer drop-off rates by 30%, while sports betting platforms are predictively matching fan excitement levels to increase conversions by up to 15%. Pharma is next.

> "Real-time monitoring will let teams pivot faster, refining messaging or strategy as trends emerge. AI will help by synchronizing algorithms to recognize and act on those patterns automatically."
>
> – *AMANDA SWEENEY, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, CLIENT SUCCESS*

> "Having access to what patients are saying, across advocacy groups and digital channels, and being able to filter and find the right signals at scale is huge."
>
> – *JASON SMITH, CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER, AI AND ANALYTICS*

PREDICTION #7

AI will further amplify the patient voice

The idea of artificial intelligence amplifying human input feels like something of an oxymoron, but that's exactly what AI promises to do with the patient voice. Survey data predicts that AI will help pharma companies become increasingly patient-centric by analyzing large volumes of digital dialogue, social media and advocacy data to surface the most prevalent and salient points. These insights have previously gone overlooked, but in the near-future will be pivotal in influencing strategy.

Crucially, AI will help teams quantify the patient voice and put a financial and strategic value on what patients and advocacy groups are saying – bringing patient-centric data closer to the center of pharma decision-making. At the same time, AI will help to ensure the voices of underrepresented groups are heard. PharmaPhorum points out how hearing the patient voice will simultaneously enhance the patient experience, and reduce unnecessary costs for pharma companies: "*when patients get exactly what they need through predictive analytics and personalisation, programmes are also more efficient. Redundant, ineffective communications are removed.*"

> “Compliance is going to become a competitive issue. If you can’t adopt quickly, you can’t innovate – and you’ll miss the opportunity.”
>
> *– TONY PAGE, SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT, INSIGHT ANALYTICS*

PREDICTION #8

AI will see compliance move from constraint to catalyst

While 42% of our survey respondents expect stricter privacy and compliance expectations to slow innovation in 2026, 19% believe the exact opposite will happen – that clearer guardrails will accelerate innovation through increased confidence and adoption. Regulatory changes are never going to make pharma teams’ lives easier, but survey data predicts that compliance will become a competitive differentiator in 2026 and beyond.

Those organizations that are capable of building smart governance processes around data privacy and security, accepting reasonable risk and becoming early AI adopters will gain a significant competitive advantage over those that aren’t. In this paradigm, zero risk equals zero growth, or as PwC puts it: “*going fast while still looking around the corners and fighting off threats will be more important, as will recovery from crisis — meaning those who can navigate, pivot and bounce back should have an edge.*” Pharma experts predict that integrating AI into pharma business processes is about to become an industry standard. Launch teams cannot afford to be left behind.

PREDICTION #9

AI will usher in a new age of collaboration

Pharma’s silo issue is as much about collaboration as it is about data. Industry experts predict that AI will pave the way for more streamlined collaboration between both internal departments, and externally among the world’s top pharma companies. AI will enable truly global, cross-border insight generation – smoothing information exchange across regions, governments, organizations, and internal teams.

AI is capable of cleaning and harmonizing data to remove the friction points that have traditionally impeded collaboration – helping to establish and maintain trusted partnerships. This is already happening, with organizations collaborating on secure data sharing to enhance the drug development process. Our survey data predicts that this ‘new age of collaboration’ will deepen in years to come, to the benefit of the industry and patients alike.

> It’s less about integrating insights and more about integrating decision-making. I don’t care where the insights are coming from—medical or commercial—it doesn’t really matter to me, as long as I have a strong engine for processing those insights and making decisions based on them.”
>
> *– LUCA DEZZANI, VP MEDICAL AFFAIRS, BIONTECH*

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> "Whether or not you have Launch Intelligence, your competitor might, and that should be the real concern."
>
> *– PAUL SIMMS, CEO IMPATIENT HEALTH*

Final thoughts

We don't expect these predictions to come true all at once, or to become industry standards by 2026 – but we'll certainly see evidence that most of them are underway by the time the clocks go forward next spring. Ironically, predicting future trends is something artificial intelligence particularly excels at – so we asked some popular LLMs what they thought of our predictions. The consensus is that the early adopters will achieve several of these predictions by 2026, but industry-wide transformation may take 5-10 years. So that begs the question: will you be an early adopter, a fast follower, or a late bloomer? It goes without saying that those quickest to integrate AI within their launch processes will be those best positioned to capitalize on the early opportunities.

Interestingly, our survey respondents were split on what the greatest impact of AI will be in 2026. Unsurprisingly, 47% say increased speed and efficiency will have the greatest impact, but a hardly insignificant 33% expect it to be predictive accuracy and foresight. This split hints at the truly transformative impact of AI-powered launch intelligence. It's not just one area that's set for profound change, but many – from drug development through to commercialization, patient engagement, data analysis and even compliance. The cliché has it that 'the past is history and tomorrow is a mystery', but the future of AI in pharma is an exciting one.

If you'd like to know more about how these trends will shape your 2026 launch and commercialization strategy, speak to our team today.

ABOUT WITHIN3

We help pharma teams make faster, smarter decisions by unifying the most critical sources of insight — including field activity, HCP engagement, social sentiment, claims data, congresses, and more — into a single, decision-ready view of the market. Powered by Know Everything™, Within3 accelerates time-to-insight and delivers precise, actionable intelligence that drives measurable impact across brand, medical, and field teams.

Trusted by all the top 20 pharmaceutical companies, Within3 enables life sciences organizations to move at the speed of launch — without sacrificing insight or clarity. To learn more about the Launch Intelligence Platform™ or to request a demo, www.within3.com.