3 Takeaways for Healthcare Orgs Looking to Leverage Analytics

Analytics ranks among the most powerful tools in healthcare's COVID-19 pandemic toolkit. Without it, other resources — vaccines, personal protective equipment, and new treatments, for example — wouldn't be as useful.

How can we leverage the insights derived from analytics to move healthcare into a new era? Susan Dentzer, senior policy fellow at the Robert J Margolis Center for Health Policy at Duke University, led a discussion among healthcare leaders during the InterSystems Virtual Summit. Here are their three key takeaways

1 Leverage Machine Learning to Overcome Biases

U.S. public health officials quickly learned that COVID-19 was hitting low-income and diverse communities hardest, prompting a national conversation about health inequities.

Where else might inequities be hiding in plain sight? How can healthcare root them out? Machine learning models could provide clues, but only if their underlying data is healthy, said Alex MacLeod, head of global healthcare initiatives at InterSystems.

"Machine learning looks at your past and predicts the future. But if your past is biased, then its models are tilted," MacLeod explained. "You have to be very aware of your metrics and how you're training your models."

2 Scrutinize Niche Analytics Solutions

As President and CEO of Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center for more than a decade, Kevin Tabb, MD, has vetted many healthcare analytics solutions. There's one type of solution that he consistently warns against.

"I caution everybody to be careful about the niche solutions that I frequently see — something that only solves a small piece of the problem" he said. "In many cases, all it does is shift the problem from one place within our system to another."

Without broader, interoperable solutions, health systems risk making decisions based on incomplete or false insights. "Focus on the small number of solutions that make the biggest difference in improving quality and outcomes," he said.

3 Build Partnerships Around Seamless Insights

Thanks to CyncHealth, Nebraska's health information exchange and prescription drug monitoring program, the state benefits from a public-private partnership that's building community resiliency not just for this pandemic, but the next one, too.

CyncHealth connects to its subscribers through InterSystems HealthShare, which it uses to analyze data on staffing, hospital capacity, community spread, and more — all in real time, across Nebraska and into Iowa.

For Jaime Bland, DNP, RN, the HIE's president and CEO, that degree of oversight will likely prove crucial beyond the pandemic.

"Putting all that data together in one place really helps policymakers and public health folks make more informed decisions," she said.

Analytics delivers the insights that top healthcare leaders depend on. Learn more from these experts — watch their Virtual Summit session HERE.

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