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Series Article

Role of Project Managers and PMOs
Future of Healthcare and Artificial Intelligence (AI)
by Dr. Deepa Bhide and
Hrishikesh Deshpande, PhD

Future of Healthcare and Artificial Intelligence (AI):

Practical Insights and Diverse Perspectives on AI in Healthcare Project Management [1]

Role of Project Managers and PMOs in AI for Healthcare (Part 1) [2]

Dr. Deepa Bhide, MBBS, DCH
and
Hrishikesh Deshpande, PhD

Abstract

The healthcare industry is transforming, with Artificial Intelligence (AI) emerging as a powerful tool for revolutionizing patient care, medical research, and administrative efficiency. However, successfully implementing AI projects in this highly regulated and complex environment requires a unique blend of expertise. Enter the project manager (PM) and the Project Management Office (PMO) – two crucial roles that are the backbone for ensuring the successful integration of AI in healthcare. This article, the first of two parts, delves into the critical roles PMs and PMOs play in navigating the complexities of AI-enabled healthcare projects. With input from 22 experts, we have investigated specific challenges PMs and PMOs face, the skillsets they need, and the strategies they could employ to ensure the successful development, deployment, and continuous improvement of AI solutions within the healthcare landscape.

Experts:

Ananth HV, **Aparajita Banerjee**, **Asiya Sheikh**, **Balakumar Chinnaiyan**, **Chen Qian** (Samsung NeuroLogica, USA), **Dashrath Alluri, Joana Seringa** (NOVA National School

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[1] Editor's note: This series is by Dr. Deepa Bhide, a practicing pediatrician with additional experience in information technology and project management. Her 2023 series of articles introduced readers to a range of important issues related to programs, projects and PM in healthcare. In this new series, Dr. Bhide will interview experienced healthcare, IT and project professionals around the world to reflect on the impact of artificial intelligence on global healthcare. Learn more about Dr. Bhide and her co-author this month in their author profiles at the end of this article. To read previous works by Dr. Bhide, visit https://pmworldlibrary.net/authors/dr-deepa-bhide/

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of Public Health, Portugal), **Kalicharan Mahasivabhattu, Moragh Boyle** (iCAIRD, UK), **Naresh Jindam, Srinidhi GS, Sucheendra Kumar** (SBX Corporation, Japan), **Sudarshan Rao, Sumanth Raman** (Algorithm Health Ltd., India), **Sunanda Gundavajhala** (DispatchTrack, India), **Sunil Lakdawala** (A3 Remote Monitoring Technologies Ltd., India), **Tega Brian, Utsab Banerjee**

Additional experts participated in the study anonymously.

1. Introduction and study design

The study was conducted by collecting the responses of experts via Google Forms, which had pre-defined questions tailored to the study's objectives. The questions encompassed various technical and project management topics and were organized into three distinct domains: Generic, PM, and PMO.

Based on the 22 responses we obtained, the article is organized into two parts for clarity and organization. This first article focuses on the foundational elements ensuring the success of AI projects in healthcare: The role of AI in project management, perceived benefits and challenges, skillset of successful project managers, etc. The second article, to be published in August 2024, will encompass the crucial considerations around project management approaches and PMOs.
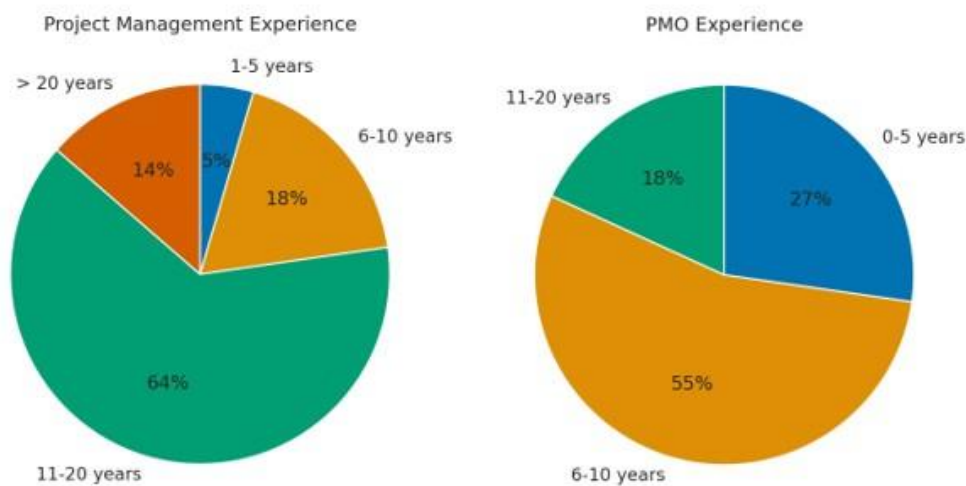

Figure 1: Project Management and PMO experience of the respondents

Figure 1 illustrates the project management and PMO experience of the respondents. The participants in this study bring a wealth of knowledge and practical insights from their experience in project management and PMO roles. They exhibit diverse expertise from various industries and regions worldwide, including the USA, UK, Germany, Portugal, UAE, India, and Japan. Their backgrounds span multiple sectors, including healthcare,

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technology, pharmaceuticals, and research. This diverse group of professionals provides a robust foundation for understanding the intricacies and challenges of AI in healthcare project management.

These experts have managed medical imaging and diagnostics projects, pharmaceutical manufacturing and drug lifecycle management, R&D, remote patient management, public health initiatives, and digital transformation. A few examples of the projects include:

- Digital healthcare initiatives, such as Ayushman Bharat, to provide affordable healthcare and preventive care.
- COVID-19 management, including tracking and resource allocation.
- Healthcare revenue management is used to enhance financial processes.
- Pharmaceutical manufacturing and quality.
- Research and development of medical imaging technologies.
- End-to-end portfolio programs for Computed Tomography (CT) product lines.
- Product development for telemedicine and remote patient management.

2. Role of artificial intelligence

The projects handled by the experts reflect a broad spectrum of applications, showcasing the critical role of AI in transforming the healthcare landscape. AI is used in many areas, including technology, research, data analysis, programming, project management, automation, communication, and content creation. According to the participants, AI is explored explicitly in the following ways from the technical standpoint:

i. AI-powered tools and systems
Two experts have developed AI chatbots and helpdesk solutions to improve healthcare services and patient interaction. Other systems and devices include remote patient management products that leverage AI to facilitate patient monitoring, virtual nursing systems for real-time patient monitoring, and applications for streamlining clinical trial processes.

ii. Medical imaging and diagnostics
The experts have integrated AI into radiology pathways to enhance diagnostic accuracy. They have deployed advanced imaging infrastructures and developed diagnostic tools, such as Mammography Intelligent Assessment (MIA), for better patient outcomes. Medical image analysis is explored for segmenting anatomical structures, pathology detection, and assisting in radiological interpretation.

iii. Research and development (R&D)
The experts have developed advanced medical imaging technologies and integrated imaging with non-imaging data. Their work utilizes AI for better decision-making and health management across various applications.

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iv. Workflow optimization

The experts have optimized healthcare workflows by simplifying, anticipating, and automating processes with AI. They have developed tools for AI-based anatomy detection, image quality assessment, and improved medical imaging workflows to enhance efficiency and accuracy. Such AI-driven imaging workflows address critical issues healthcare stakeholders face, such as technologist burnout, human errors, poor image quality, missed diagnoses, and patient recalls.

v. Pharmaceutical and drug lifecycle management

Their pharmaceutical and drug lifecycle management work includes applying AI to improve manufacturing, quality, and Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) operations. They have also developed digital analytics models to enhance the quality of cancer treatment products and provided strategic insights across various therapies.

vi. Innovative AI Applications

They have created precise medical coding tools using print-based AI and Subjective, Objective, Assessment, and Plan (SOAP) AI, which streamline documentation and reduce errors. Additionally, they have experimented with Generative AI to explore new possibilities in healthcare.

vii. Consulting and strategic insights

The consulting experience of experts includes advising pharmaceutical companies on AI/ML applications and providing strategic insights. They have also helped healthcare companies to leverage AI for improved decision-making and strategic planning.

By actively involving patients and the public in developing and deploying AI solutions, professionals can gather valuable feedback and insights that guide the design and functionality of healthcare AI tools. The engagement activities include surveys, focus groups, patient advisory panels, and public consultations. These initiatives ensure that AI tools are technically sound, socially acceptable, and aligned with real-world needs.

Participants in the study have expressed excitement about various aspects of AI integration in healthcare project management. These insights underscore the transformative potential of AI in improved decision-making, continuous learning, and future readiness. Key takeaways include:

i. Improved decision-making:

AI simplifies and improves decision-making processes, allowing project managers to make more informed and timely decisions. By automating repetitive tasks, AI has reduced the effort required for routine administrative work, enabling project managers to focus on more strategic aspects of their projects.

ii. Education and continuous learning:

The experts highlighted that educating teams on the benefits of AI is crucial for efficient project execution. Continuous learning and adapting to new AI technologies are essential to stay ahead in the rapidly evolving healthcare field.

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iii. Innovation and future readiness:

AI opens up new possibilities for innovation in the technical and project management aspects of healthcare, enabling the development of cutting-edge solutions that can address current and future challenges. Experts have embraced AI and are exploring its potential to add more value to their organizations.

In general, AI has shown promise in improving day-to-day workflows:

- Large Language Models (LLMs) automate repetitive tasks such as email drafting, data analysis, and routine administrative work.
- Accelerate idea discovery and generation as an enabler in technology development, especially in exploratory phases. LLMs help brainstorm and develop new ideas and refine existing ones.
- Assisted programming, writing code stubs or unit tests, and bug analysis.
- Classifying projects, analyzing best practices, and improving estimation accuracy.
- Recommending risk management strategies based on lessons learned from previous projects.
- Creating content from relevant reference documents/PPTs.Refining unstructured data from various sources into structured reports.
- Drafting reports, taking meeting notes, creating content, etc.

3. Challenges and solutions in integrating AI into healthcare projects

While AI offers excellent potential for tasks like analysis and automation, integrating it into healthcare projects presents several challenges. These include gaining trust and acceptance from stakeholders, navigating complex data compliance and governance regulations, ensuring access to high-quality data, bridging the knowledge gap between healthcare professionals and AI developers, articulating the financial value of AI projects, assembling the right blend of experts, managing rapid technological advancements and emphasizing AI as a tool to support rather than replace human healthcare providers. Responders stress that the human element in healthcare is critical to patient outcomes. The key to success lies in collaboration, communication, continuous learning, and building solutions tailored explicitly to healthcare needs.

Category	Challenges	Mitigation Strategies Proposed
Stakeholder acceptance and trust	- Acceptance of AI solutions by stakeholders and their trust in AI - Resistance from end users, especially doctors, for various reasons, including lack of openness to AI	- Educating the clinical community, involving them in AI application development - Showcasing successful AI implementations and presenting proof-of-concepts (POCs) to build trust

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		- Encouraging openness to AI among medical professionals and ensuring that training data is comprehensive and representative
Data compliance and governance	- Navigating compliance and strict data/application governance regulations - Long waiting times for data approval, sometimes escalating to a national level while taking a few years for approval	- Developing and evaluating risk-management options appropriate for each stage of the pipeline - Strong collaboration among different teams, including engineering, digital compliance, and management - Restricting AI tools to trusted partners and potentially developing in-house tools to maintain control over data security
Data access and quality	- Difficulty in accessing high-quality, integral data for AI applications - Challenges posed by non-parameterized data entered into EMR systems	- Emphasizing the importance of quality data and advocating for proper data management practices - Public and patient involvement and engagement activities
Understanding of AI	- Huge gap in understanding of AI between Healthcare professionals and software counterparts - Understanding the potential and limitations of specific approaches - Understanding AI and its workings instead of accessing it as a black-box	- Investing in training and education, organizing workshops to bridge the knowledge gap, fostering cross-disciplinary expertise, and increasing collaboration between healthcare professionals and AI developers - Invest in the development of explainable AI solutions
Perception of AI	Emphasizing AI as a tool to aid rather than replace human healthcare providers	Educating stakeholders on AI's supportive role, emphasizing AI as a tool to aid rather than replace human expertise
Justifying ROI	Difficulty articulating the financial value of AI projects	Inclusion of finance experts in early project stages, using clear metrics and case studies to demonstrate ROI, and aligning AI initiatives with strategic business goals
Acquiring the right team	- Finding the right blend of industry experts, experienced project managers, and skilled AI developers	- Blending teams and aligning them toward shared goals - Encouraging the development of interdisciplinary skills and domain knowledge

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	- Bringing experts from diverse fields together and ensuring they work cohesively - AI experts often lack domain knowledge	- Filling impactful AI roles requires leaders to go beyond traditional HR practices by engaging with academic institutions, networking extensively at conferences and on social media
Technology changes	Managing knowledge in the face of rapid technological advancements	- Continuous education and training - Investigating cutting-edge tools and technology through exploratory projects - Implementing knowledge-sharing practices among team members
Process Control Integration	- Integration of AI model recommendations for process control in strictly regulated environments - If AI predictions are unreliable, it could lead to compliance issues, poor product quality, and patient safety issues	- Strong collaboration among different teams, including engineering, digital compliance, and solution architects - Investment in advanced digital infrastructure for auto-validation, alerts, and audit-ready control strategies

5. Key success factors in AI-driven healthcare projects

Figure 2: Key success factors in healthcare AI projects

Figure 2 illustrates the critical success factors in healthcare AI projects. It is observed that 32% of respondents highlight the importance of robust data governance and management, emphasizing the need for foolproof and secure handling of healthcare data. Nearly 24% underscore the need for cross-functional collaboration, an essential aspect for professionals with diverse expertise working together. Continuous stakeholder engagement, which reflects the importance of regular interaction with stakeholders, is noted by 18% of respondents. Not surprisingly, adherence to healthcare regulations is crucial in this tightly regulated healthcare environment and accounts for another 18%. Smaller segments, representing 4%, indicate the necessity

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of risk management through timely decision-making and the secure handling of sensitive data, which are essential in effectively managing healthcare AI projects.

Successfully implementing AI in healthcare requires a multifaceted approach. Data quality is paramount, as AI relies on clean, accurate, and ethically sourced data to function effectively. Project teams must be diverse, bringing together experts in clinical science, project management, machine learning, and AI deployment. Regulatory considerations are critical, requiring strict adherence to data privacy and security protocols such as HIPAA. Ethical considerations must be addressed, including preventing bias in AI models and the responsible use of AI in patient care. Transparency with stakeholders and clear communication about the limitations and risks of AI is crucial for gaining the trust of healthcare professionals to adopt AI in clinical practice. Furthermore, an iterative development process is necessary to ensure the AI model meets user needs and delivers optimal performance.

6. Comparison of Traditional IT and Healthcare AI projects

AI projects in healthcare differ significantly from traditional IT projects. AI focuses on automation and data-driven decisions, requiring meticulous data validation and ethical considerations due to its impact on patient care. Managing AI projects requires collaboration among diverse teams to develop and maintain complex and evolving algorithms while adapting to the frequently changing technology landscape. In contrast, traditional IT projects prioritize operational efficiency with less stringent data requirements and established technologies. These projects are managed by relatively less diverse teams with lower stakes, allowing for linear scaling and more predictable maintenance.

6.1 AI Application Considerations

Feature	Traditional IT Projects	Healthcare AI Projects
Algorithm development	Involves standard software development processes with predefined outputs	Requires training and refining ML and DL models that can learn from data and improve over time, demanding complex and iterative training and testing cycles
Iterative development	Typically follows a linear development and scaling process	Involves iterative approaches to continuously improve AI models, adapting to new data and feedback
Data Accuracy	Less stringent data accuracy requirements	Requires meticulous checking of input data, as errors can significantly impact outcomes
Data sensitivity and privacy	Potentially less stringent data privacy measures	Requires stringent data sensitivity, privacy, and quality management
Evaluation and testing	Follows regular testing procedures to ensure functionality	Needs robust, independent evaluations and continuous monitoring to validate performance

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Evolving technology	Slower evolution of tools and technology	The AI technology landscape changes frequently, requiring continuous updates with evolving tools and technologies
Decision-making	Project managers perform manual tasks to make informed decisions	Increased automation and data-driven decisions
Public perception	Generally accepted with minimal skepticism	Requires addressing stakeholder skepticism and ethical concerns
Impact on users	Primarily impacts operational efficiency	Directly affects patient care with no margin for error

6.2 Project Management Considerations

Feature	Traditional IT Projects	Healthcare AI Projects
Project Approach	Less iterative approach	Iterative approach to build user confidence
Project scope and scaling	Linear scaling and predictable outcomes	Non-linear scaling with dynamic outcomes and model drifts
Regulatory compliance	Standard compliance with IT regulations	Life-impacting applications with strict compliance
Risk management	- Lower risks due to established technologies - Employs standard risk management procedures to mitigate common risks	- Increased risks due to a lack of technological maturity - Demands robust risk management strategies due to the higher stakes and complexity
Change management	Changes follow established procedures and are relatively predictable	A continuously evolving landscape necessitates flexibility and openness to accommodate frequent changes and advancements
Project timelines	No impact on project timelines	Potential for reduced project timelines through automation
Maintenance	Regular, predictable maintenance schedules	Dynamic maintenance addresses data updates and model drifts and ensures continuous improvement of AI systems.
Team composition	Less diverse project teams, primarily IT professionals	Requires diverse teams, including clinicians, software engineers, and AI experts, to collaborate effectively

7. Project management skills for healthcare AI projects

Implementing AI projects in this sensitive and complex environment requires managers with special skills beyond traditional project management expertise. This section explores the essential qualities future project managers must develop to lead AI-driven healthcare initiatives effectively. The discussion covers core project management practices and the technical skills related to AI that are crucial for navigating the complexities of AI in healthcare.

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To empower project professionals in today's evolving workplace, the PMI Talent Triangle emphasizes three key aspects: Ways of Working (technical skills), Power Skills (communication and collaboration), and Business Acumen (leadership and business management).

7.1 Project management skills:

i. T-Leadership skills: A combination of deep knowledge in specific areas (the vertical bar of the "T") and broad skills in several other areas (the horizontal bar of the "T") enabling collaborative and all-inclusive leadership.

ii. Stakeholder management: Ability to identify and manage stakeholders throughout the project lifecycle. Effective stakeholder management ensures that the project meets its needs and expectations.

iii. Collaboration: Ability to collaborate across disciplines to bring together a team with diverse expertise for effective teamwork and project execution.

iv. Communication skills: Strong communication skills to coach the team and effectively articulate the project's value proposition in various contexts, such as end-users, business stakeholders, sponsors, and the public. Additionally, the ability to translate technical metrics into business measures.

v. Continuous learning: Openness to learning new skills, adaptability to new technologies, and practical application of these in projects.

vi. Agile development: Proficiency in agile development approaches for efficient scope management, iterative and incremental delivery, and continuous improvement of project execution and AI solutions.

vii. Technical knowledge of project management: Ability to select the appropriate project management method, including change, risk, people management, etc.

7.2 Technical/application-oriented skills for PM:

i. Understanding AI: In-depth knowledge of AI, ML, and emerging technologies to leverage them effectively in healthcare projects.

ii. Domain knowledge: Gaining expertise in healthcare domain knowledge to align AI solutions with clinical needs.

iii. Technological adaptability: Staying updated with evolving AI tools and technologies to investigate and integrate the latest technology.

iv. AI product lifecycle: Understanding the entire lifecycle of AI products, from conception to development, deployment, and maintenance.

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v.   Understanding the potential and limitations of AI: Knowledgeable about the capabilities and constraints of AI, including the ability to translate even minor inaccuracies into appropriate mitigation strategies based on clinical needs.

vi.   Data Management: Proficiency in using AI-based querying, understanding datasets, and ensuring data accuracy and integrity.

vii.   Regulatory Compliance and Privacy: Understanding the latest data privacy legislations and ensuring compliance with regulatory standards.

viii.   Ethical and Responsible AI: Knowledge of ethical considerations and responsible AI practices to avoid biases and ensure fairness in AI applications.

ix.   Generative AI Tools: Basic knowledge of generative AI tools and their applications in workflow improvement and healthcare.

8. Key factors for the successful adoption of AI in healthcare
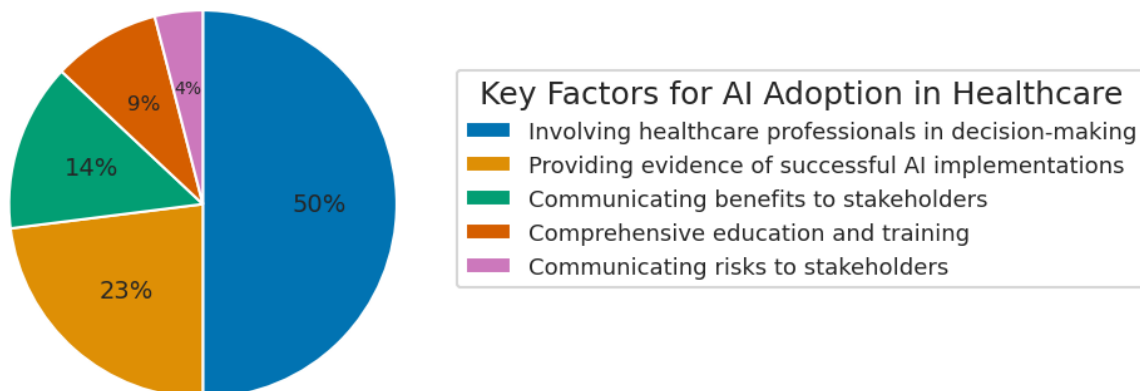

Figure 3: Key factors for the successful adoption of AI in healthcare

Figure 3 illustrates the critical factors for AI adoption in healthcare. Among 22 participants, 50% emphasized that successful AI projects in healthcare hinge on strong collaboration between project managers and healthcare professionals. By fostering a collaborative environment, they can work together to optimally integrate AI applications into clinical workflows for improved patient care, operational efficiency, and a more effective healthcare system. Healthcare professionals are invaluable to the overall projects; they bring domain knowledge and identify challenges and ethical considerations to the project. Including healthcare professionals in the application development while increasing their familiarity with AI could lead to trust and a more positive attitude toward adopting AI solutions.

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In addition to collaboration, other essential factors for the successful adoption of AI include providing evidence of successful AI implementations, which accounts for 23%. This highlights the importance of showcasing real-world metrics to build trust. Communicating the benefits of AI to the stakeholder group accounts for 14%, comprehensive education and training for 9%, and communicating risks to stakeholders for 4%, highlighting the various aspects necessary for successful AI adoption.

Summary

Artificial Intelligence is revolutionizing healthcare by automating repetitive tasks and analyzing vast medical data. AI enables accurate diagnoses and helps optimize workflows, freeing up valuable time for healthcare professionals. This shift improves patient care, increases efficiency, and supports a more sustainable healthcare system. AI significantly improves patient outcomes through a broad range of applications, including advanced medical imaging, accelerated drug discovery, expanded telemedicine access, and lower operational costs, thus making healthcare delivery more efficient and effective.

Implementing AI in this highly regulated and complex environment requires specialized project management skills. Effective project management ensures that AI initiatives are well-coordinated, compliant with regulations, and aligned with clinical needs. This article provides project managers with insights and practical strategies for leading AI-driven healthcare projects, highlighting the critical role of project management in realizing the potential of AI in healthcare.

Key takeaways for project managers are as follows:

1. Develop a combination of deep knowledge in specific areas and broad skills in several others, enabling collaborative and inclusive leadership essential for healthcare AI projects.

2. Gain a deep understanding of AI and domain knowledge to develop clinically impactful AI applications. At the same time, foster a collaborative environment within a team of diverse experts and ensure stakeholder engagement throughout the project. This ensures that AI solutions meet business needs and expectations.

3. Maintain openness to learning new skills, adapting to new technologies, and staying updated with the latest tools and trends to apply them effectively in healthcare projects. Promote an environment of knowledge-sharing and continuous learning within your team, leveraging their diverse expertise.

4. Adhering to healthcare regulations and addressing ethical considerations such as data privacy and AI biases is critical. Project managers must ensure compliance and promote ethical AI practices.

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5. To build stakeholder trust, prioritize comprehensive and representative training data, and invest in developing explainable AI solutions. To gain acceptance, the clinical community should be involved in AI development by addressing their concerns and encouraging openness to AI among medical professionals.

By understanding these key considerations and takeaways, project managers can navigate the complexities of AI in healthcare, ensuring that AI technologies are seamlessly integrated and deliver projects that improve patient care and optimize healthcare operations.

Part 2 of the article, to be published next month, will explore project management approaches and the role of PMOs in AI-driven healthcare.

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this interview series are those of the speakers and do not necessarily reflect the views of any entities or associated parties. Proprietary names of AI applications have been avoided unless explicitly mentioned by the interviewees.

About the Authors

Dr. Deepa Bhide

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Dr. Deepa Bhide, MBBS, DCH, PMP, has over 20 years of professional experience where she has blended medical practice and research with IT and Project Management. She juggles consulting, training, and operations and is proficient in clinical medicine, project management, and healthcare information technology. Starting her career as a medical practitioner, she has worked with varied organizations before her current stint as director and clinical expert for Inventurus Knowledge Solutions.

Deepa's growing interest and work in these areas, born from her day-to-day patient interactions, helped her view Project Management as a backbone of progressive healthcare. Her paper on "Patient Care - A Project Management Perspective" has received global recognition and acclaim. With a physician background as a solid

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foundation to leverage IT/PM skills and knowledge, Deepa has blended her broad-based experience and learnings to present a unified, holistic, and wholesome view of Project Management and Healthcare, a cross-domain confluence. Through various webinars, events, talks, and writings across platforms, Deepa has been an evangelist in championing global project management during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A Gold medalist from Osmania University for standing First in the MBBS course, she pursued her DCH in Pediatrics and Child health. Deepa has served various roles in local and global Project Management Institute (PMI) regions. She remains actively engaged with PMI and has been a participant and speaker for various national and global meetings and online events.

Deepa lives in Hyderabad, India, and loves traveling, singing, and experimenting with global cuisine. She can be contacted at deepa.bhide@gmail.com.

Hrishikesh Deshpande

Hamburg, Germany

Hrishikesh Deshpande, PhD is an AI Professional and Agile Project Leader with a 14-year career trajectory in leading the research and development of AI-driven innovations. His interests include machine learning, computer vision, and medical image processing. He is passionate about building AI solutions that can significantly impact human lives.

Hrishikesh holds a master's degree from Indian Institute of Technology Bombay and a Ph.D. from INRIA Rennes France. His work at A3 Remote Monitoring Technologies Mumbai led to the development of a tele-cardiology product, enabling diagnosis for patients in remote areas and saving hundreds of lives. At Philips Research Hamburg, his technological contributions and team leadership resulted in several successful software transfers for product integration. He is a co-inventor of over 30 patents and has authored 10 scientific publications in renowned medical imaging journals and conferences.

Hrishikesh actively volunteers in the scientific community, serving as a scientific reviewer for international conferences and holding esteemed positions as a session chair and mentor. After earning his PMP certification in March 2024, Hrishikesh contributes to the PMI Germany Chapter by leading a Community of Practice for Project Management in Life Sciences and helping professionals with PMP preparation through a study group. Hrishikesh regularly shares insights on AI and project management on LinkedIn and can be reached at https://www.linkedin.com/in/deshpandehn/