Three HBS alumni discussed digital health and its biggest trends and issues. They also described which MBA skills are most valuable and shared career advice.

**Big Picture:** Digital health is about using technology to improve health care. This includes improving access to care, quality of care, efficiency, and decreasing costs.

**Smaller Picture:** Encompasses a broad range of technologies including electronic medical records (EMRs), genomics, diagnostics, telemedicine, analytics, consumer applications, wellness tools, patient web portals, and much more.

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**Digital HEALTH DEFINED**

**Trends & OPPORTUNITIES**

“There has never been a better time to be a digital health entrepreneur. The opportunities are vast.”

**EMRs.** Adoption of EMRs and EHRs (electronic health records) is increasing, raising the importance of clinical data capture, changing workflows, and creating an ecosystem of apps.

**Analytics and big data.** EMRs/EHRs are creating a wealth of data that can be used for clinical and administrative purposes.

**Population health management.** Payors and providers are using digital tools and analytics to manage entire populations and adapt to payment models like capitation.

**Consumer empowerment.** Digital technology is engaging consumers, giving them more control over their care, and helping them make more informed health decisions.

**Personal health tools.** Innovative new consumer products, with digital sensors, are being developed to assist in tracking personal health metrics (e.g., Fitbit).

**Hospital administration tools.** Management and administrative tools are improving hospital operations.
Key Issues & Challenges

Acceptance and adoption. Consumers are unaccustomed to paying out of pocket for health care, and providers, payors, and employers need a proven ROI before adopting.

Not living up to expectations. A risk is that digital health technologies won’t live up to their significant hype or expectations.

Implementation and integration. Because health care is so fragmented, there are major challenges implementing new technologies. To succeed, digital health technologies must become integrated throughout the value chain.

Most Valuable MBA Skills

Basic business skills. Often digital health technologies are driven by technologists, not by business people, creating an opportunity for MBAs.

Strategic thinking. Companies in digital health need people who can see the big picture and think strategically.

Operational capabilities. Companies need flexible jacks of all trades who can make it happen, operationalize, and execute.

Communication skills. Being able to “translate” between technologists and business partners is critical.

Relationship building. Building relationships internally and externally and bringing people together around a shared vision is a recipe for success.

Career Advice

Become knowledgeable about the industry. Do your homework and develop a solid understanding of health care and digital health. Understand trends, companies, and technologies. Stay current.

Pick winning technologies. Develop a point of view on which technologies look sustainable and will have system-wide impact. There are enormous opportunities for MBAs.

Reapply lessons from other industries. Many industries have already adopted digital technologies. Learn from them and leverage previous experiences.