

WBA, Microsoft to develop new health care delivery models

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Companies aim to improve health outcomes and lower overall costs with enhanced digital and retail experiences and an R&D commitment to build health care solutions through seven-year agreement



Walgreens Boots Alliance Inc. (WBA) and Microsoft Corp. have joined forces to develop new health care delivery models, technology and retail innovations to advance and improve the future of health care. The companies will combine the power of Microsoft Azure, Microsoft's cloud and AI platform, health care investments, and new retail solutions with WBA's customer reach, convenient locations, outpatient health care services and industry expertise to make health care delivery more personal, affordable and accessible for people around the world.

Current health care systems are a complex combination of public- and private-sector organizations, providers, payors, pharmaceutical companies and other adjacent players. While there has been innovation in pockets of health care, there is both a need and an opportunity to fully integrate the system, ultimately making health care more convenient to people through data-driven insights. This is what brought WBA and Microsoft together. Through this strategic partnership, the companies will deliver innovative platforms that enable next-generation health networks, integrated digital-physical experiences and care management solutions.

As part of the strategic partnership, the companies have committed to multiyear research and development (R&D) investment to build health care solutions, improve health outcomes and lower the cost of care. This investment will include funding, subject-matter experts, technology and tools. The companies will also explore the potential to establish joint innovation centers in key markets. Additionally, in 2019 WBA will pilot up to 12 store-in-store "digital health corners" aimed at the merchandising and sale of select health care-related hardware and devices.

The companies will focus on connecting WBA stores and health information systems to people wherever they are through their digital devices. This will allow people to access health care services, such as virtual care -- when, where and how they need it.

WBA and Microsoft will also focus on enabling more personalized health care experiences from preventative self-care to

chronic disease management. WBA will pursue lifestyle management solutions in areas such as nutrition and wellness via customers' delivery method of choice, including digital devices and digital applications or in-store expert advice.

Additionally, the companies will work to build a seamless ecosystem of participating organizations to better connect consumers, providers -- including Walgreens and Boots pharmacists --pharmaceutical manufacturers and payors. Microsoft and WBA will leverage each other's market research and identify the right partners to develop solutions.

Through this agreement, Microsoft becomes WBA's strategic cloud provider, and WBA plans to migrate the majority of the company's IT infrastructure onto Microsoft Azure. This will include new transformational platforms in retail, pharmacy and business services, new capability in data and analytics, as well as certain legacy applications and systems. The company also plans to roll out Microsoft 365 to more than 380,000 employees and stores globally, empowering them with the tools for increased productivity, advanced security, internal collaboration and customer engagement.