



The Impact of Automation in Healthcare: Improving Efficiency and Patient Outcomes

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Abstract

Automation refers to the use of technology to perform tasks without human intervention. This can include tasks such as manufacturing, data processing, and transportation. Automation can be achieved through the use of machines, robots, and computer programs. The goal of automation is typically to increase efficiency and productivity, reduce human error, and lower costs. Automation can be applied in many industries, including manufacturing, transportation, healthcare, and finance.

Keywords: Automation, Healthcare, Pharmaceutical

1. Introduction

Automation in healthcare refers to the use of technology to perform tasks that would traditionally be done by humans. This can include tasks such as record keeping, medical procedures, diagnostics, medication management, supply chain management, telemedicine, clinical decision making, and data analysis.

The use of automation in healthcare can improve efficiency and accuracy, reduce human error, and lower costs. Electronic health records (EHR) systems, for example, automate the process of patient record keeping and improve communication between healthcare providers. Robotics can be used in surgeries to improve precision and reduce the time and risk involved. Automated diagnostic systems can be used to process and analyze medical images, such as X-rays and CT scans, to aid in the detection and diagnosis of diseases.

Medication management can be improved through automation, reducing errors in prescribing, dispensing, and administering drugs. Supply chain management can be optimized through automation, reducing waste and inefficiency. Telemedicine uses automation to connect patients with healthcare providers remotely through technology such as video conferencing and remote monitoring.

Clinical Decision Support Systems uses automation to provide healthcare providers with real-time access to patient data and evidence-based guidelines to aid in decision making. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) can be used to analyze large amounts of medical data to identify patterns and improve patient outcomes.

Overall, automation in healthcare has the potential to improve patient outcomes, reduce costs, and increase efficiency, but there are also concerns about how it might impact the workforce, data privacy and security, and access to care.

2. Electronic Health Records (EHR) Systems

Automation of patient records allows far more efficient and accurate record keeping, improves communication between healthcare providers and enables population health management.

EHR Systems are computerized systems used to store and manage patient medical information. These systems automate the process by providing real-time access to patient data.

One of the main benefits of EHR systems is that they allow for more efficient and accurate record keeping. Patient data is stored in a centralized location and can be accessed by authorized healthcare providers from any location, which improves continuity of care. EHR systems also enable population health management by allowing healthcare providers to analyze data on large groups of patients to identify trends and improve outcomes.

EHR systems also improve communication between healthcare providers by providing real-time access to patient data. This enables healthcare providers to make more informed decisions, and can reduce the risk of errors and duplication of tests.

EHR systems also enable patients to access their own medical records and communicate with healthcare providers through patient portals. This can improve patient engagement and self-management of their health.

Another advantage of EHR is that a doctor can electronically send prescriptions to pharmacies along with Health and allergy information, drug usage and drug refill schedule.

However, EHR systems can also present some challenges, such as data privacy and security concerns, and the need for proper training and technical support. This risk can be eliminated by mandating the healthcare providers, pharmacists and authorized personnel to sign HIPAA agreement that prevents one to disclose sensitive information.

Figure 1 depicts the EHR process diagram. [1]

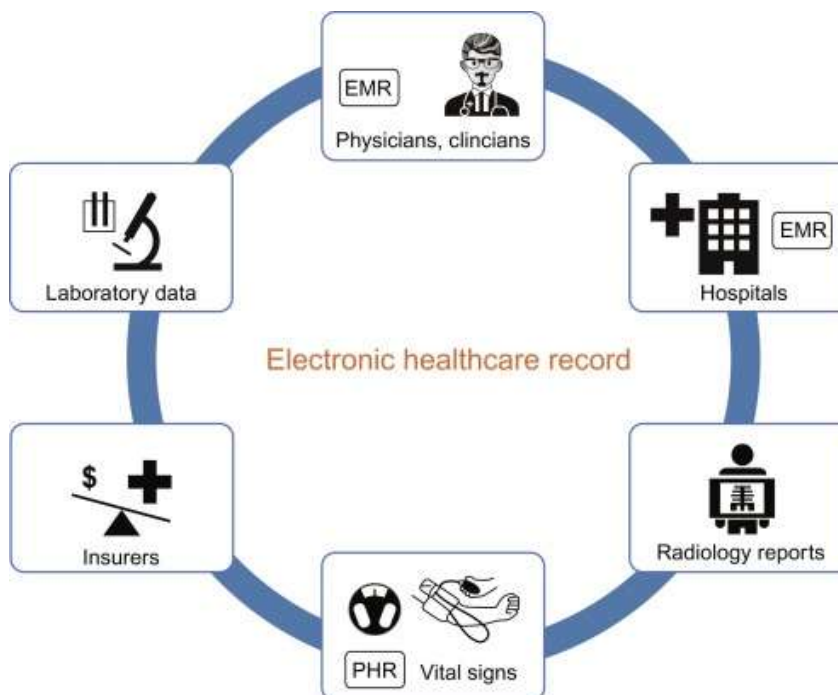


Figure 1: An example of Electronic Health Records (EHR) process diagram

An electronic health record (EHR) process diagram typically illustrates the flow of information and the various steps involved in the creation, storage, and retrieval of electronic health records. The specific details of the EHR process diagram may vary depending on the system being used, but it typically includes the following components:

- **Data Entry:** This is the initial step in the EHR process, where patient demographic information, medical history, vital signs, and other relevant data is entered into the system. This information can be entered by healthcare providers, patients, or other authorized personnel.
- **Data Storage:** Once the data has been entered, it is stored in a secure electronic database for future reference and analysis. This data can be accessed and updated by authorized personnel as needed.
- **Data Retrieval:** This step allows authorized personnel to access and view the stored data for patient care and treatment. The data can be retrieved in various formats, such as summary reports, detailed patient records, or specific data fields.
- **Data Analysis:** This step involves the use of analytics and other tools to analyze the stored data and extract meaningful insights. This can be used to improve patient care, identify trends, or track outcomes.
- **Data sharing:** This step allows the healthcare provider to share patient's data with other healthcare providers. This can be done through secure messaging, fax, or other methods of secure data sharing.
- **Data Backup and Archiving:** Regular backups and archiving of the EHR data is performed to ensure the integrity and availability of the data in case of any system failure or other disaster.
- **Forecasting and Replenishment:** Usage of drugs and healthcare products at a given geography, climate condition, population age and season of the year can be used to predict the supply of drugs and fulfil the storage accordingly.

This is a general EHR process diagram, and it may vary depending on the EHR system being used, but the above-mentioned steps are the most common components of an EHR process.

Some of the key feature of EHR is discussed as below:

- **Centralized storage of patient data:** EHR systems store patient information in a centralized location, which can be accessed by authorized healthcare providers from any location.
- **Improved record keeping:** EHR systems automate the process of record keeping and provide more efficient and accurate record keeping.
- **Population health management:** EHR systems allow healthcare providers to analyze data on large groups of patients to identify trends and improve outcomes.
- **Improved communication between healthcare providers:** EHR systems provide real-time access to patient data, which improves communication and decision making between healthcare providers.
- **Patient engagement:** EHR systems enable patients to access their own medical records and communicate with healthcare providers through patient portals, which can improve patient engagement and self-management of their health.

3. Robotics

Robotics can be used in surgeries and other medical procedures to improve precision and reduce the time and risk involved. Robotics in healthcare refers to the use of robots and robotic devices to perform tasks that would traditionally be done by humans. Robotics can be used in a variety of medical procedures, including surgery, rehabilitation, and diagnostic imaging.

One of the main benefits of using robotics in healthcare is that they can improve precision and accuracy in procedures, reducing the time and risk involved. For example, robotic surgical systems can be used to perform minimally invasive procedures with greater precision than traditional surgical methods. Robotics can also be used to improve rehabilitation outcomes by providing patients with more precise and repetitive therapy.

Robotics can also be used to improve diagnostic imaging. For example, robots can be used to assist in the positioning of patients for imaging procedures such as CT scans or MRI, reducing the need for human assistance. Robotics can also be used to automate repetitive tasks such as sample handling and analysis in laboratories.

However, the implementation of robotics in healthcare also presents some challenges, such as the high costs of purchasing and maintaining robotic equipment, and the need for proper training for healthcare professionals. Additionally, the integration of robotics into existing healthcare systems can be difficult, requiring significant changes in workflow and process. Figure 2 shows an example how robotics is used in healthcare for automation. [2]



Figure 2: Automation in Healthcare using Robotics

Important key aspect of robotics is:

- **Improved precision and accuracy:** Robotics can be used to improve precision and accuracy in medical procedures, reducing the time and risk involved.

- **Minimally invasive surgery:** Robotics can be used to perform minimally invasive procedures with greater precision than traditional surgical methods.
- **Rehabilitation:** Robotics can be used to improve rehabilitation outcomes by providing patients with more precise and repetitive therapy.
- **Diagnostic imaging:** Robotics can be used to assist in the positioning of patients for imaging procedures such as CT scans or MRI, reducing the need for human assistance.
- **Automation of repetitive tasks:** Robotics can be used to automate repetitive tasks such as sample handling and analysis in laboratories
- **Drug Compounding:** Machines can be used for mixing ingredients in accordance to the prescriptions tailored for patient. This process can eliminate the risk of human error and human touch.

4. Diagnostics

Automated diagnostic systems can be used to process and analyze medical images, such as X-rays and CT scans, to aid in the detection and diagnosis of diseases.

Automation in diagnostics refers to the use of technology to aid in the detection and diagnosis of diseases. Automated diagnostic systems can be used to process and analyze medical images, such as X-rays and CT scans, to aid in the detection and diagnosis of diseases.

One of the main benefits of automated diagnostic systems is that they can improve the accuracy and efficiency of diagnostic processes. For example, computer-aided detection (CAD) systems can be used to identify abnormalities in medical images, such as tumours in X-rays, that may be missed by human radiologists. Automated diagnostic systems can also be used to analyze large amounts of data, such as genetic data, to identify patterns and improve disease diagnosis.

Automated diagnostic systems can also help in reducing human errors, increasing the speed of diagnosis, and providing more accurate results.

Some of the key features of diagnostics are:

- **Improved accuracy and efficiency:** Automated diagnostic systems can improve the accuracy and efficiency of diagnostic processes by processing and analyzing medical images to aid in the detection and diagnosis of diseases.
- **Computer-aided detection:** Computer-aided detection (CAD) systems can be used to identify abnormalities in medical images, such as tumours in X-rays, that may be missed by human radiologists.
- **Big data analysis:** Automated diagnostic systems can be used to analyze large amounts of data, such as genetic data, to identify patterns and improve disease diagnosis.
- **Reducing human errors:** Automated diagnostic systems can help in reducing human errors, increasing the speed of diagnosis, and providing more accurate results.

5. Medication Management

Automation can be used to improve medication safety by reducing errors in prescribing, dispensing, and administering drugs.

Medication management automation refers to the use of technology to improve the safety and efficiency of prescribing, dispensing, and administering drugs. Automation can be used to reduce errors in medication management, such as prescribing the wrong drug or incorrect dosage, and improve communication between healthcare providers.

One of the main benefits of medication management automation is that it can reduce errors in prescribing, dispensing, and administering drugs. For example, computerized physician order entry (CPOE) systems can be used to check for drug interactions and contraindications before a medication is prescribed. Automated dispensing systems can be used to dispense medication in hospitals and long-term care facilities, reducing the risk of medication errors. Figure 3 below depicts the CPOE integration and workflow. [3]



Figure 3: CPOE integration and workflow

CPOE, or Computerized Physician Order Entry, is a system that allows healthcare providers to enter and manage patient orders, such as medication prescriptions, laboratory tests, and diagnostic imaging, electronically.

Here is a general overview of the process of CPOE integration and workflow:

- **Requirements Gathering:** The first step is to gather the requirements of the healthcare organization and understand their specific needs and goals for CPOE integration. This includes understanding the current systems and workflow in place, as well as any regulatory or compliance requirements.
- **System Design:** A team will design the CPOE system based on the requirements gathered in the first step. This includes designing the user interface, integrating the system with existing systems and databases, and configuring security and access controls.
- **Development and Testing:** The team will then develop and test the CPOE system. This includes coding the system, testing it for functionality and usability, and ensuring that it meets the requirements gathered in the first step.
- **Deployment and Implementation:** Once the system has been developed and tested, the team will deploy and implement it in the healthcare organization. This includes installing the system, configuring it to the organization's specific needs, and providing training and support to users.
- **Maintenance and Support:** After the system has been deployed and implemented, the team will provide ongoing maintenance and support to ensure that it continues to function properly and meet the organization's needs. This includes troubleshooting and resolving any issues that arise, as well as providing updates and upgrades as needed.

It's worth mentioning that the above mentioned are the general process and can vary depending on the specific needs and requirements of the healthcare organization. The team will work closely with the organization to ensure that the CPOE integration and workflow meet their specific needs and goals.

Medication management automation can also improve communication between healthcare providers by providing real-time access to patient medication information. This can help to ensure that patients receive the right medications at the right time, and can improve continuity of care.

Medication management automation can also improve the efficiency of the medication management process and reduce costs by reducing waste and inefficiency.

Below are the important aspects of medical management:

- **Reduced errors:** Medication management automation can reduce errors in prescribing, dispensing, and administering drugs.
- **Computerized physician order entry (CPOE) systems:** CPOE systems can be used to check for drug interactions and contraindications before a medication is prescribed.
- **Automated dispensing systems:** Automated dispensing systems can be used to dispense medication in hospitals and long-term care facilities, reducing the risk of medication errors.
- **Improved communication:** Medication management automation can improve communication between healthcare providers by providing real-time access to patient medication information, which can help to ensure that patients receive the right medications at the right time.
- **Efficiency and cost reduction:** Medication management automation can improve the efficiency of the medication management process and reduce costs by reducing waste and inefficiency.

6. Supply Chain Management

Automation can be used to optimize the management of medical supplies and equipment, reducing waste and inefficiency.

Automation in supply chain management in healthcare refers to the use of technology to optimize the management of medical supplies and equipment. Automation can be used to improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the supply chain by reducing waste and inefficiency.

One of the main benefits of automation in supply chain management is that it can improve inventory management by providing real-time visibility into stock levels and enabling automated reordering. Automation can also be used to optimize the transportation and logistics of medical supplies and equipment, reducing delays and improving delivery times.

Automation in supply chain management can also improve the traceability of medical supplies and equipment, which is critical for ensuring patient safety and compliance with regulatory requirements.

Furthermore, automation can be used to optimize the management of medical equipment, such as scheduling maintenance and repairs, and tracking the usage of equipment. Figure 4 shows the flow diagram of healthcare supply chain management with optimal energy consumption.[4]

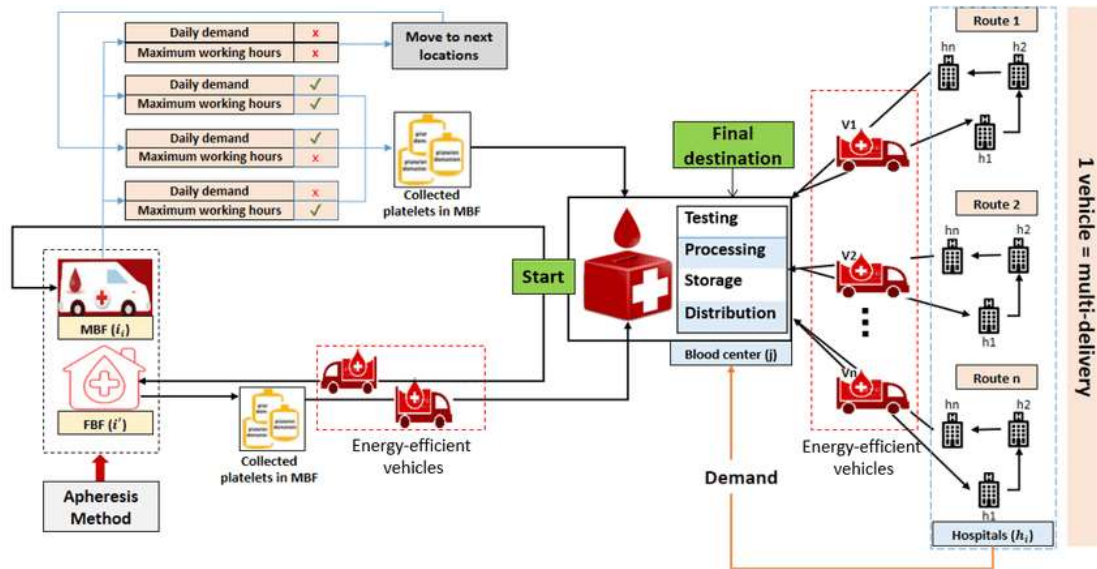


Figure 4: Flow diagram of healthcare supply chain management with optimal energy consumption

Generally speaking, a flow diagram for healthcare supply chain management with optimal energy consumption would likely include the following steps:

- **Supply and demand forecasting:** This step involves predicting the future demand for healthcare products and services, as well as identifying potential supply constraints. This information is used to plan and optimize the supply chain.
- **Sourcing and procurement:** This step involves identifying and purchasing the necessary materials and products from suppliers. The goal is to minimize costs and maximize the efficiency of the supply chain.
- **Production and distribution:** This step involves the production and distribution of healthcare products and services to customers. The goal is to minimize energy consumption and optimize the transportation scheme.
- **Transportation and logistics:** This step involves the movement of goods and services from suppliers to customers. This includes the use of energy-efficient transportation methods, such as rail or sea transport, and the optimization of routes to minimize energy consumption.
- **Inventory management:** This step involves managing the inventory of products and materials to ensure that the right products are in the right place at the right time. This includes minimizing energy consumption through the use of energy-efficient storage methods.
- **Performance measurement and monitoring:** This step involves monitoring the performance of the supply chain and identifying areas for improvement. This includes tracking energy consumption and identifying opportunities to reduce energy consumption.

It's worth mentioning that the above-mentioned flow diagram is general, and it may vary depending on the specific requirements of the healthcare organization.

Some of the key aspects of supply chain management are:

- **Improved inventory management:** Automation in supply chain management can improve inventory management by providing real-time visibility into stock levels and enabling automated reordering.
- **Optimized transportation and logistics:** Automation can be used to optimize the transportation and logistics of medical supplies and equipment, reducing delays and improving delivery times.
- **Traceability:** Automation in supply chain management can also improve the traceability of medical supplies and equipment, which is critical for ensuring patient safety and compliance with regulatory requirements.
- **Medical equipment management:** Automation can be used to optimize the management of medical equipment, such as scheduling maintenance and repairs, and tracking the usage of equipment.

7. Telemedicine

Automation can be used to connect patients with healthcare providers remotely through technology, such as video conferencing and remote monitoring.

Telemedicine refers to the use of technology to connect patients with healthcare providers remotely. Automation can be used to enable telemedicine by providing the necessary infrastructure and tools for remote communication and monitoring.

One of the main benefits of telemedicine is that it can improve access to healthcare, particularly for patients in remote or underserved areas. Telemedicine can also improve continuity of care by enabling patients to receive follow-up care remotely.

Automated remote monitoring systems can be used to collect and transmit patient data, such as vital signs, to healthcare providers, enabling them to monitor patients remotely. Automated appointment scheduling and reminder systems can also be used to improve the efficiency of telemedicine appointments.

Telemedicine can also improve the efficiency of the healthcare system by reducing the need for in-person visits, and can save costs.

The benefits of using telemedicine is discussed below:

- **Improved access to healthcare:** Telemedicine can improve access to healthcare, particularly for patients in remote or underserved areas.
- **Continuity of care:** Telemedicine can also improve continuity of care by enabling patients to receive follow-up care remotely.
- **Automated remote monitoring:** Automated remote monitoring systems can be used to collect and transmit patient data, such as vital signs, to healthcare providers, enabling them to monitor patients remotely.
- **Automated appointment scheduling and reminder systems:** Automated appointment scheduling and reminder systems can be used to improve the efficiency of telemedicine appointments.
- **Efficiency and cost savings:** Telemedicine can improve the efficiency of the healthcare system by reducing the need for in-person visits, and can save costs.

8. Clinical Decision Support Systems

Automation can be used to provide healthcare providers with real-time access to patient data and evidence-based guidelines to aid in decision making.

Clinical Decision Support Systems (CDSS) are computerized systems that provide healthcare providers with clinical knowledge and patient data to aid in the diagnosis and treatment of patients. Automation can be used to enable CDSS by providing the necessary infrastructure and tools for the integration of clinical knowledge and patient data.

One of the main benefits of CDSS is that they can improve the quality of care by providing healthcare providers with evidence-based recommendations and alerts for diagnosis and treatment. CDSS can also improve patient safety by identifying potential adverse drug interactions or contraindications.

CDSS can also be used to provide personalized care by integrating patient-specific data, such as genetics and comorbidities, into the decision-making process. Furthermore, CDSS can improve the efficiency of the healthcare system by reducing the need for unnecessary tests and procedures, and can save costs. Figure 5 depicts the CDSS architecture. [5]

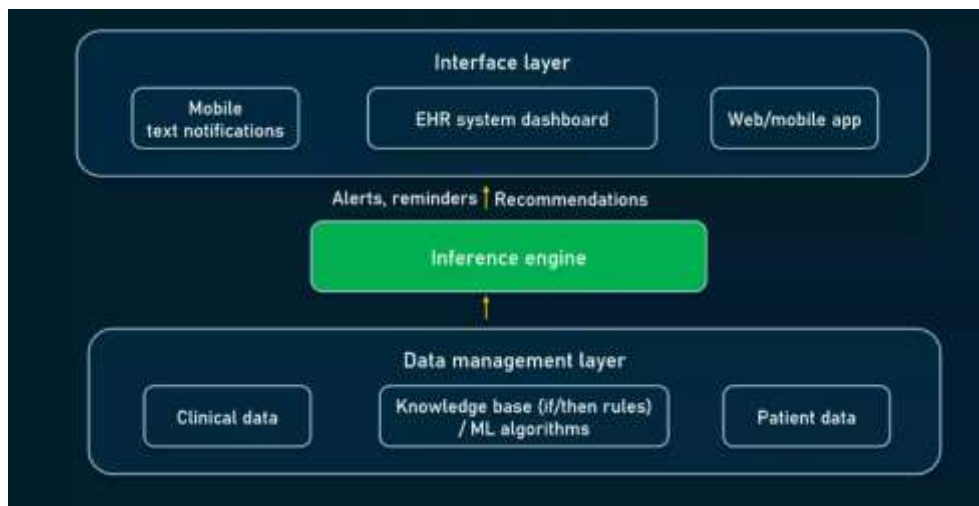


Figure 5: CDSS architecture

CDSS, are computer-based systems that provide healthcare providers with evidence-based information and guidance to assist them in making clinical decisions.

Here is a general overview of the architecture of a CDSS:

- **Data Repository:** The CDSS architecture includes a data repository that stores patient data and clinical knowledge, such as electronic health records (EHRs), lab results, and guidelines. This data can be used to provide decision support to healthcare providers.

- **Knowledge Management:** CDSS architecture includes a knowledge management component that enables the system to access and analyze the data stored in the data repository. This includes natural language processing (NLP) techniques to extract relevant information and identify patterns in the data.
- **Decision Support Engine:** The decision support engine is the core component of the CDSS architecture. It uses the data and knowledge from the data repository and knowledge management component to provide evidence-based recommendations and guidance to healthcare providers.
- **User Interface:** The CDSS architecture includes a user interface that allows healthcare providers to access and interact with the system.

Important aspects of CDSS are as follow:

- **Improved quality of care:** Clinical Decision Support Systems (CDSS) can improve the quality of care by providing healthcare providers with evidence-based recommendations and alerts for diagnosis and treatment.
- **Patient safety:** CDSS can also improve patient safety by identifying potential adverse drug interactions or contraindications.
- **Personalized care:** CDSS can be used to provide personalized care by integrating patient-specific data, such as genetics and comorbidities, into the decision-making process.
- **Efficiency and cost savings:** CDSS can improve the efficiency of the healthcare system by reducing the need for unnecessary tests and procedures, and can save costs.
- **Reliable data:** The implementation of CDSS requires reliable data to make accurate recommendations.

9. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML)

AI and ML can be used to analyze large amounts of medical data to identify patterns and improve patient outcomes.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) are technologies that can be used to analyze large amounts of data and make predictions or decisions. These technologies can be used in a variety of healthcare applications, such as diagnostics, drug development, and clinical decision support.

One of the main benefits of using AI and ML in healthcare is that they can improve the accuracy and efficiency of medical decisions by analyzing large amounts of data and identifying patterns that would be difficult for humans to detect. For example, AI and ML can be used to analyze medical images, such as X-rays or CT scans, to aid in the detection of diseases such as cancer.

AI and ML can also be used to improve drug development by identifying new drug targets and predicting the efficacy and safety of new drugs. AI and ML can also be used to improve the efficiency of healthcare systems by automating repetitive tasks and reducing the need for human intervention.

However, the implementation of AI and ML in healthcare also presents some challenges such as the need for large amounts of high-quality data, the need for proper training for healthcare professionals, and the need for ethical guidelines to ensure that these technologies are used fairly and transparently.

Moreover, there are concerns about the potential for bias and discrimination in the decision-making process of AI and ML systems. It is important to ensure that these systems are developed and implemented in a way that is transparent and explainable, and that they are subject to rigorous testing and evaluation.

Key aspects that are more supportive in healthcare using AI & ML are discussed below:

- **Improved accuracy and efficiency:** Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) can improve the accuracy and efficiency of medical decisions by analyzing large amounts of data and identifying patterns that would be difficult for humans to detect.
- **Medical image analysis:** AI and ML can be used to analyze medical images, such as X-rays or CT scans, to aid in the detection of diseases such as cancer.
- **Drug development:** AI and ML can be used to improve drug development by identifying new drug targets and predicting the efficacy and safety of new drugs.
- **Efficiency of healthcare systems:** AI and ML can be used to improve the efficiency of healthcare systems by automating repetitive tasks and reducing the need for human intervention.

10. Automation in pharmaceutical industry

Automation in the pharmaceutical industry refers to the use of technology to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of drug development, manufacturing, and distribution. Automation can be used to improve the speed and accuracy of processes, reduce costs, and improve compliance with regulatory requirements.

- **Drug Development:** Automation can be used in the discovery and development of new drugs by using techniques such as high-throughput screening, computer-aided drug design, and virtual reality.

- **Manufacturing:** Automation can be used to improve the efficiency and consistency of manufacturing processes, such as formulation, filling, and packaging.
- **Quality control and compliance:** Automation can be used to improve quality control and compliance with regulatory requirements by using techniques such as process analytical technology (PAT) and electronic batch record (EBR) systems.
- **Supply chain management:** Automation can be used to improve the efficiency and traceability of supply chain management by using techniques such as RFID technology and logistics automation
- **Sales and Distribution:** Automation can be used to improve the efficiency of sales and distribution by using techniques such as automated order processing and inventory management systems.

11. Conclusion

In conclusion, automation in healthcare has the potential to improve the efficiency, accuracy, and safety of healthcare delivery by reducing errors, streamlining processes, and providing real-time access to patient data. Automation can be used in various areas of healthcare such as Electronic Health Records (EHR) Systems, Robotics, Diagnostics, Medication Management, Supply Chain Management, Telemedicine, Clinical Decision Support Systems, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) and pharmaceuticals.

However, the implementation of automation in healthcare also presents some challenges such as high costs, the need for proper training, and the need for ethical guidelines to ensure that these technologies are used fairly and transparently. Additionally, the integration of automation into existing healthcare systems can be difficult, requiring significant changes in workflow and process. Furthermore, there are concerns about data privacy and security, and the potential for bias and discrimination in the decision-making process. It is important for healthcare organizations to consider these challenges and take appropriate measures to mitigate them in order to fully realize the benefits of automation in healthcare.

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